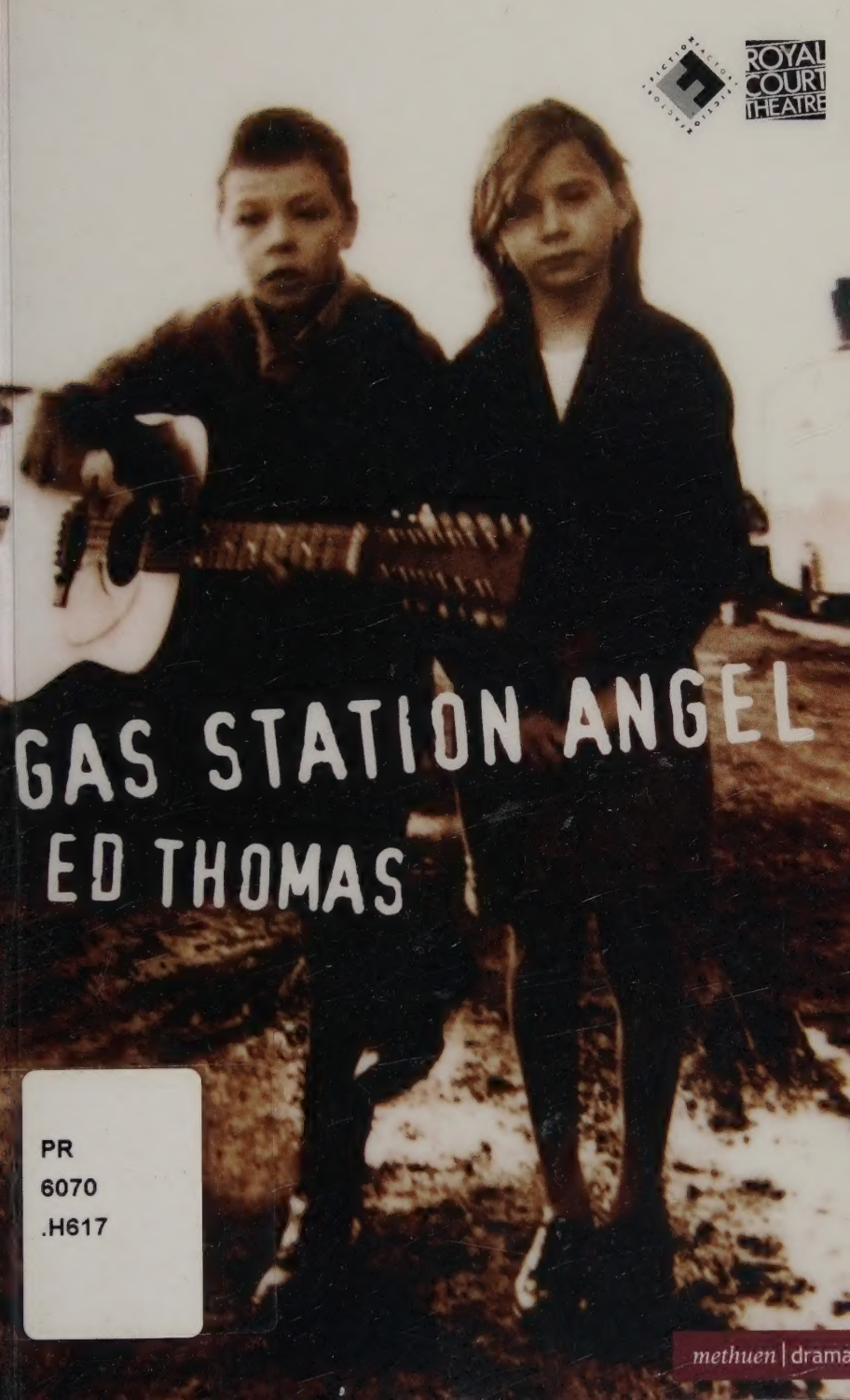

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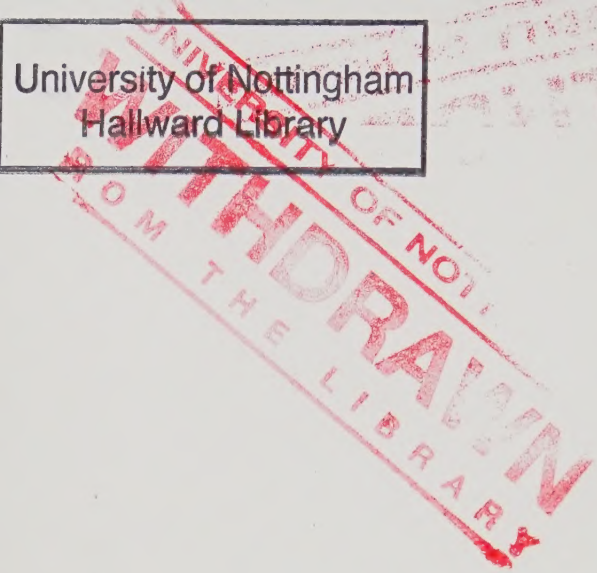

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GAS STATION ANGEL

Ed Thomas

Published by Methuen Drama
in association with
the Royal Court and Fiction Factory

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ROYAL COURT THEATRE

he Royal Court and Fiction Factory present

Gas Station Angel

by Ed Thomas

First performance at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, West Street, WC2
on 3 June 1998

First performed at the Newcastle Playhouse, Newcastle Upon Tyne
on 6 May 1998

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ponsored by Barclays New Stages – Staging the New

BARCLAYS
STAGING THE NEW

e Royal Court Theatre is financially assisted by the Royal Borough of nsington and Chelsea. Recipient of a grant from the Theatre Restoration nd & from the Foundation for Sport & the Arts. The Royal Court's Play velopment Programme is funded by the A.S.K. Theater Projects. pported by the National Lottery through the Arts Council of England. yal Court Registered Charity number 231242.

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Funded by THE ARTS COUNCIL OF ENGLAND

Barclays New Stages – Staging the New continues a six-year partnership with the Royal Court, developed through the ground-breaking **Barclays New Stages** awards and festivals.

This new initiative promotes the exploration of innovation in form and staging, with four new productions and a stage design conference:

- **THE CHAIRS** by Eugène Ionesco, translated by Martin Crimp
  19 November - 31 January 1998

- **NEVER LAND** by Phyllis Nagy
  8 January - 7 February 1998

- **I AM YOURS** by Judith Thompson
  20 February - 21 March 1998

1007291990

- **GAS STATION ANGEL** by Ed Thomas
  3 - 20 June 1998
  Ed Thomas won a 1995 Barclays New Stages Award for *Songs From a Forgotten City*

The conference will focus on modern theatre design and the needs of theatres in the new millennium.

Barclays New Stages – Staging the New is part of Barclays broad sponsorship of British theatre, touring high-quality productions through **Barclays Stage Partners** and celebrating excellence through the **Barclays Theatre Awards**. Theatre sponsorship is an integral part of Barclays overall community investment programme, which encompasses the arts, education and the environment as well as wide-ranging support for the voluntary sector.

Gas Station Angel

by Ed Thomas

Cast

Mati & Chambermaid	Donna Edwards
Marshall	Roger Evans
Gruff	Russell Gomer
frig, Keith & Mr Entertainment	Simon Gregor
Bri	Richard Harrington
Mary Annie	Valmai Jones
Ace	Richard Lynch
Bron	Siwan Morris
Manny	John Ogwen

Director	Ed Thomas
Design and Lighting	Peter Mumford
Composer / Musical Director	John Hardy
Sound Designer	Mike Beer
Producer	Mike Parker
Assistant Director	Steve Fisher
ssistant Design and Lighting	John Buswell
Production Manager	Ian Buchanan
Company Stage Manager	Maris Sharp
Deputy Stage Manager	Sandra Grieve
Costume Supervisor	Sam Mealing
Set Construction	Miraculous Engineering
Scenic Artist	Patrick Hamilton

e Royal Court and Fiction Factory would also like to thank the following with this production: rdrobe care by Persil and Comfort courtesy of Lever Brothers Ltd, refrigerators by Electrolux and lips Major Appliances Ltd; kettles for rehearsals by Morphy Richards; video for casting purposes Hitachi; backstage coffee machine by West 9; furniture by Knoll International; freezer for backstage supplied by Zanussi Ltd 'Now that's a good idea.' Hair styling by Carole at Moreno, 2 Holbein ce, Sloane Square 0171-730-0211; Closed circuit TV cameras and monitors by Mitsubishi UK Ltd. ural spring water from Aqua Cool, 12 Waterside Way, London SW17 0XH, tel. 0181-947 5666. erhead projector from W.H. Smith; Sanyo U.K for the backstage microwave; Watford Palace atre; Alison Sewell - student placement; Tesco's Superstore, Cardiff.

Ed Thomas (writer and director)
Ed is the artistic director, producer and writer of Fiction Factory Ltd (formerly known as Y Cwmni). He has worked extensively in theatre, television, film and radio, winning numerous awards - including BAFTA Arts Foundation, BBC Arts and Cel;tic Film Festival Awards.
As a writer and director for theatre.
For the Royal Court: Song From a Forgotten City (& Y Cwmni. Touring UK, Europe and Australia).
Other theatre includes: House of America (UK tour & Festival of Perth); Adar Heb Adenydd (Welsh tour & Edinburgh Festival); The Myth of Michael Roderick (UK tour); Flowers of the Dead Red Sea (Tramway, Glasgow; Chapter, Cardiff; and Waterman's, London); East From the Gantry (Tramway, Glasgow; Kiev, Ukraine; Sherman, Cardiff; UK & Ireland tour); Hiraeth / Strangers In Conversation (Oriel Gallery, Cardiff); Envy (Welsh tour); Double Indemnity (Theatr Clwyd - as director).
Television includes: Hunllef Yng Nghymru Fydd, A Silent Village / Pentre Mud, Fallen Sons, Mind to Kill / Yr Heliwr, Satellite City.
Films: House of America.
Publications: Frontline Intelligence - New Plays For the Nineties (Methuen); Three Plays - House of America, Flowers of the Dead Red Sea, East From the Gantry (Seren).

Mike Beer (sound designer and touring engineer)
For the Royal Court: Song From a Forgotten City (Y Cwmni).
Theatre includes: Tom Jones (Mid Wales Touring Company); Up'n'Under, The Merchant of Venice, Diaries of Adrian Mole. Dracula, The Snow Spider, Matilda (Sherman, Cardiff. In house desginer 1991-92).
Theatre production and engineering includes: Cinderella (Alpha Studio); Enter Achilles (DV8 Physical Theatre, North American tour); The New Adventures of Noddy and The Witches (Clarion Promotions, UK tour).

Donna Edwards
Theatre includes: Up on the Roof (Queen's Hornchurch); Cwm Glo, Loose End (Sherman, Cardiff); Love's Labours Los (Mappa Mundi Theatre Co.); The Devils, Prayer For Wings (Theatr Clwyd Co.).
Television includes: Mortimer's Law, Ta Chwaer, Glan Hafren, A Mind to Kil Streetlife, Judas and the Gimp, Friday O My Mind, Angry Earth / Llid Y Ddaear, Chil of Love / Calcon Fach Yn Ddwy, Heaven O Earth, Dinas, The Life and Times of Lloy George, Off to Philadelphia in the Morning
Film includes: Rebecca's Daughters.

Roger Evans
Theatre: Crash (tour UK).
Telivsion includes: Crime Traveller, Th Bill.
Film includes: Human Traffic.
Trained at the Gulidhall School of Musi and Drama.

Russell Gomer
Theatre includes: The Town That Wen Mad (Volcano); Up 'N'Under, The Merchan of Venice, Macbeth (Sherman, Cardiff); Th Castle, Hamlet, The Tempest (Moving Bein Theatre Co.); Cyrano de Bergerac (RSC) House of America, The Myth of Michae Roderick, Envy, Flowers of the Dead Re Sea, Song From a Forgotten City (Fictio Factory).
Television includes: Skip Day in Splott, Relative Stranger, Insect Life, Mwy N Phapur Newydd, Iechyd Da.
Film includes: Boy Soldier, Street Life Journey's End.
Radio includes: The Citadel, Flowers of th Dead Red Sea, Live at the Sherman.

Simon Gregor
For the Royal Court: Weldon Rising (Liverpool Playhouse), Inventing a Ne Colour (RNT Studio & Bristol Old Vic).
Other theatre includes: The Front Pag (Donmar Warehouse); Beauty and the Beas (Young Vic); Full Moon (Theatr Clwyd Young Vic); Woman in Mind (Windsc Theatre Royal); Damned For Despair, Thre

dgements in One (Gate); Good Person of tzuan (RNT); Master Harold and the Boys ontact, Manchester); Marat Sade, Wild ney, Happy Haven (West Yorshire yhouse); Privates On Parade (Octagon, lton); Catch 22 (Dukes, Lancaster); rriage of Figaro (Theatr Clwyd); Mabingoi oving Being Theatre Co.).

levision includes: Men Behaving Badly, e Keep, Love On a Branch Line, Blag, arice, Drop the Dead Donkey, Queen of ubs, The Bill, Kavanagh QC.

m includes: Bodywork, Last Seduction The Island On Bird Street, Life of crates, A Casualty of War, Young scanini, Escape From Sobibor.

hn Hardy (composer / musical director)
iginal music for film includes: Hedd Wyn, reetlife.

cumentary series: Visions of Snowdonia, ypt Uncovered.

chestral scores include: The Life Story of vid Lloyd George (accompanied the rdiff premiere of the rediscovered 1918 n), Blue Letters From Tanganyika (BBC tional Orchestra of Wales, St David's ll, Cardiff).

era includes: Flowers (toured by Music eatre Wales - based on *Flowers of the ad Red Sea* by Ed Thomas); The Roswell cident (toured England and Wales); Mis ch Du / Black February (Welsh National era, Fishguard Community); De ofundis (commissioned by the choir of estminster Abbey for their 1998 *Century Martyrs* celebrations).

ored for Radio: A Clockwork Orange dio 4).

chard Harrington
eatre includes: House of America (tour, e Fiction Factory); Un Nos Ar Faes ryddon (tour, Spectacle Theatre Co.); thing To Pay (Thin Language/Made in ales tour); The Snow Queen (Sherman, rdiff).

levision includes: Iechyd Da, Tiger Bay, bol Y Cwm, Mind to Kill, Y Fargen, ronaut, Streetlife, Oliver's Travels, Halen Yn Y Gwaed, Gadael Lenin, Broken Glass, Judas and the Gimp, Dafydd, Cwm Hyfryd, Civvies, Gopath, Splat, 1996, District Nurse, Swigs.

Film includes: House of America, Rampage, The Proposition.

Radio includes: The Assassin, The Elizabethans, The Great Subterranean Adventure, A Civil War, Three O'Clock at Ponty, Y Streic, Baby Baby, Night Must Fall.

Valmai Jones
Theatre includes: Jelly Babies, Cociau Gwair A Styciau Yd, La Malade Imaginaire, Le Medecin Malgre Lui, Tua'r Terfyn, Oliver (Theatr Gwynedd); The Snow Queen (Sherman, Cardiff); The Changelings (Theatr Clwyd).

Television includes: Pengelli, The Green Dress, William Jones, Jini Me.

Radio includes: Into the Dark, Yr Aelod, Tra Bo Dau, The Two Executioners, Jones A Jones.

Theatr directed includes: Pelgoch (Theatr Gwynedd); Bobi A Sami, Ywraig, Rigor Mortis (Theatr Baracaws - Founder Member).

Richard Lynch
For the Royal Court: Patagonia (including tour).

Theatre includes: The Mysteries (RSC); Macbeth (Theatr Clwyd); Hamlet, A Midsummer Night's Dream (Moving Being Theatre Co.); Flowers of the Dead Sea, The Myth of Michael Roderick, House of America (Y Cwmni); Abigail's Party (?); Kasper, The Castle, Victory (Moving Being Theatre); Malvinas (?); The Flies (?); The Fall And Redemption of Man (?); Godspell (?); Romeo and Juliet (?); Penderyn (?).

Television includes: The Proposition, Branwen, The Healer, Lifeboat, Thicker Than Water, Christmas Stallion, Rebecca, Bowen at Bartner, Babylon By-Passed, District Nurse, Breaking Rank, Sticky Wickets, Mwy Na Phapur Newydd, Yr Arwerthwr.

Film includes: Darklands, Watermarks, Boy Soldier.

Siwan Morris
Theatre includes: Equis, Rape of the Fair Country, The Journey of Mary Kelly (Theatr Clwyd).
Graduated from the Manchester Metropolitan School of Theatre in 1997. This will be her London debut.

Peter Mumford (designer and lighting)
For the Royal Court : The Strip (lighting design).
Other lighting designs include - for theatre: Wallenstein, Ion, Camino Real, Goodnight Children Everywhere, Henry V (RSC); School For Wives, The Winter Guest (Almeida); Mirandolina (Lyric Hammersmith); Simon Boccanegra (Munich Staatsoper); Richard II, Volpone, Mother Courage, Stanley, The Invention of Love (RNT); A Doll's House (Playhouse & Broadway); Sabina (Bush); Experiment With Air Pump (Royal Exchange Manchester). For opera: Fearful Symmetries (Royal Ballet); Fidelio (Scottish Opera at Edinburgh Festival); Luisa Miller, Madame Butterfly, Falstaff, Tannhauser (Opera North); Die Soldaten (English National Opera); The Man Who Strides the Wind (Almeida). For ballet: Carmina Burana, Edward II, Nutcracker Sweeties (Birmingham Royal Ballet); Mr Worldly Wise (Royal Ballet). For dance: The Glass Blew In.
Set & lighting design includes - for theatre: Foe (West Yorkshire Playhouse, London & European tour); Odysseus Thump, Touching Heaven (West Yorkshire Playhouse & Tokyo). For opera: Parsifal (Welsh National Opera); Modern Living, Fidelio (Opera North). For ballet: Two Part Invention (Royal Ballet).
As a director for television, includes: Strong Language, White Man Sleeps, Wyoming, Heaven Ablaze in His Breast, Dancehouse 1990, Five Dances By Martha, Cosi Fan Tutte, Swan Lake.

John Ogwen
Theatre includes: Y Twr (Cwmni Theatr Cymru); Un Nos Ola Leuad (his own adaptation for, Cwmni Theatr Cymru); The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Cherry Orchard, Leni (Cwmni Theatr Gwynedd).
Television includes: Y Twr, Tywyll Heno (& writer), Minafon, Saer Doliau, Deryn, Cyw Haul, Dr Who, District Nurse, Tylluan Wen.
Radio includes: The Archers.

TOUR DATES:

6-8 May
Newcastle Playhouse
0191 232 2336

12-13 May
Royal Flemish Theatre
Brussels
00322 217 6937

15-16 May
Theatr Brycheiniog
Brecon
01874 611 622

19-23 May
Theatr Clwyd
Mold, Flintshire
01352 755 114

27-30 May
Sherman Theatre
Cardiff
01222 230451

3-27 June
The Royal Court
Theatre Upstairs
0171 565 5000

30 June - 3 July
Swansea Grand Theatre
01792 475715

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Derwen is an award winner under the Pairing Scheme for its support of Fiction Factory. The Pairing Scheme is a Government Scheme Managed by ABSA.

Fiction Factory

Theatre

tion Factory (formerly known as Y Cwmni) has since 1989 staged ht productions written and directed by Ed Thomas and in the process nieved huge and instant recognition within Wales and a cult status tside it. Its work has become synonymous with the renaissance in novative text for the stage combined with ensemble theatre making of distinctive and unforgettable kind. Fiction Factory is one of only two ofessional companies in Britain voted entirely to the work of an ividual writer.

tion Factory have recently finished uring a brand new production of *ouse of America* - in the UK during e autumn of 1997 and ending in rth, Australia in the spring of 1998. Thomas's other plays for Fiction ctory have also toured the UK, rope, North America and Australia d his work has been translated into ny languages including French, rman and Spanish.

Song From a Forgotten City
Photograph by Brian Tarr

ouse of America, Flowers of the Dead Red a, East From the Gantry have been published as a trilogy by Seren oks (1993) and by Methuen in, *Frontline Intelligence - New Plays For e Nineties* (translated into French, Catalan and German).

ng From a Forgotten City
otograph by Brian Tarr

Productions to Date:

1997-98	*House of America*
1994-96	*Song From a Forgotten City*
1993	*Envy*
1993	*Hiraeth / Strangers in Conversation*
1992	*East From the Gantry*
1991	*Flowers of the Dead Red Sea*
1990	*The Myth of Michael Roderick*
1989	*Adar Heb Adenydd*
1988	*House of America*

House of America
Photograph by Brian Tarr

Film and Television

The creation of Fiction Factory Films in 1993 widened the company's output. Its first production, a 50 minute drama documentary *Silent Village* won the Spirit of the Festival award at the Celtic Film Festival, and both it and its brand new situation comedy *Satellite City* have been BAFTA award nominated. Current projects in development include *Gas Station Angel* as a 90-minute feature, *Rancid Aluminium*, also as a 90-minute feature, and a brand new comedy *What a Wonderful World.*

For **Fiction Factory**

Artistic Director
Edward Thomas
Producer
Mike Parker
Administrator
Julie Whyte
Production Co-ordinator
Alun Morgan
Production Manager
Ian Buchanan
Tour Manager
Steve Fisher

For further details on The Fiction Factory you can reach them in the the follwing ways:

The Fiction Factory
Chapter
Market Road
Cardiff
CF5 1QE
Telephone 01222 300320
Fax 01222 300321
E-mail:
FICTIONFACTORYLTD@btinternet.com
or visit the Fiction Factory Website:
http://www.btinternet.com/
~fictionfactoryltd/

Fiction Factory is an award winning theatre, film and television company.

JERWOOD
NEW PLAYWRIGHTS

e Royal Court is delighted that the ationship with the Jerwood undation, which began in 1993, ntinues in 1997-98 with a third series Jerwood New Playwrights.

e Foundation's commitment to pporting new plays by new playwrights s contributed to some of the Court's st successful productions in recent ars, including Sebastian Barry's ***The eward of Christendom***, Mark venhill's ***Shopping and F£££ing*** and ub Khan-Din's ***East is East***. This ason the Jerwood New Playwrights ies continues to support young atre with six productions including nor McPherson's ***The Weir***, Meredith Oakes' ***Faith***, Rebecca Prichard's ***Fair Game*** and Sarah Kane's ***Cleansed***.

The Jerwood Foundation is a private foundation dedicated to innovative cultural initiatives supporting young talent. In addition to sponsorships such as the Jerwood New Playwrights, the Foundation is embarking on a series of new, large-scale initiatives. Currently these include the Jerwood Space, a new arts centre in central London offering low-cost rehearsal and production facilities to young artistic talent; and the Jerwood Film Prize, a screenwriting competition in association with Warner Village Cinemas, The Daily Telegraph, Channel 5 and Working Title.

The Beauty Queen of Leenane
y Martin McDonagh (Photograph: Ivan Kyncl)

The Weir by Conor McPherson
(Photograph: Pau Ros)

East is East by Ayub Khan-Din
(Photograph: Robert Day)

Mojo by Jez Butterworth
(Photograph: Ivan Kyncl)

The English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre

The English Stage Company was formed to bring serious writing back to the stage. The first Artistic Director, George Devine, wanted to create a vital and popular theatre. He encouraged new writing that explored subjects drawn from contemporary life as well as pursuing European plays and forgotten classics. When John Osborne's **Look Back in Anger** was first produced in 1956, it forced British theatre into the modern age. In addition to plays by 'angry young men', the international repertoire included Bertolt Brecht, Eugène Ionesco, Jean-Paul Sartre, Marguerite Duras, Frank Wedekind and Samuel Beckett.

The ambition was to discover new work which was challenging, innovative and of the highest quality, underpinned by a contemporary style of presentation. Early Court writers included Arnold Wesker, John Arden, David Storey, Ann Jellicoe, N F Simpson and Edward Bond. They were followed by David Hare, Howard Brenton, Caryl Churchill, Timberlake Wertenbaker, Robert Holman and Jim Cartwright. Many of their plays are now modern classics.

Many established playwrights had their early plays produced in the Theatre Upstairs including Anne Devlin, Andrea Dunbar, Sarah Daniels, Jim Cartwright, Clare McIntyre, Winsome Pinnock, Martin Crimp and Phyllis Nagy. Since 1994 there has been a major season of plays by writers new to the Royal Court, many of them first plays, produced in association with the Royal National Theatre Studio with sponsorship cfrom the Jerwood Foundation. The writers include Joe Penhall, Nick Grosso, Judy Upton, Sarah Kane, Michael Wynne, Judith Johnson, James Stock, Simon Block and Mark Ravenhill. Since 1996 the Jerwood New Playwrights Series has supported new plays by Jez Butterworth, Martin McDonagh and Ayub Khan-Din (in the Theatre Downstairs), Mark Ravenhill, Tamantha Hammerschlag, Jess Walters, Conor McPherson, Meredith Oakes and Rebecca Prichard (in the Theatre Upstairs). 1997-98 sees the first Barclays New Stages - Staging the New Season, which continues a six year partnership with the Royal Court, developed through the ground-breaking Barclays New Stages Awards and Festivals. The season has so far included productions of **The Chairs**, **Never Land** and **I Am Yours**.

Theatre Upstairs productions regularly transfer to the Theatre Downstairs, as with Ariel Dorfman's **Death and the Maiden**, Sebastian Barry's **The Steward of Christendom** (a co-production with *Out of Joint)*, Martin McDonagh's **The Beauty Queen Of Leenane** (a co-production with Druid Theatre Company), Ayub Khan-Din's **East is East** (a co-production with Tamasha Theatre Company) and Conor McPherson's **The Weir**. Some Theatre Upstairs productions transfer to the West End, such as Kevin Elyot's **My Night With Reg** and Mark Ravenhill's **Shopping and F£££ing** (a co-production with *Out of Joint*).

1992-1997 were record-breaking years at the box-office with capacity houses for **Death and the Maiden**, **Six Degrees of Separation**, **Oleanna**, **Hysteria**, **The Cavalcaders**, **The Kitchen**, **The Queen & I**, **The Libertine**, **Simpatico**, **Mojo**, **The Steward of Christendom**, **The Beauty Queen of Leenane**, **East is East** and **The Chairs**.

Death and the Maiden and **Six Degrees of Separation** won the Olivier Award for Best Play in 1992 and 1993 respectively. **Hysteria** won the 1994 Olivier Award for Best Comedy, and also the Writers' Guild Award for Best West End Play. **My Night with Reg** won the 1994 Writers' Guild Award for Best Fringe Play, the Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy, and the 1994 Olivier Award for Best Comedy. Sebastian Barry won the 1995 Writers' Guild Award for Best Fringe Play, the 1995

itics' Circle Award and the 1997 ristopher Ewart-Biggs Literary Prize for **e Steward of Christendom**, and the 95 Lloyds Private Banking Playwright of Year Award. Jez Butterworth won the 95 George Devine Award for Most omising Playwright, the 1995 Writers' ild New Writer of the Year, the Evening andard Award for Most Promising aywright and the 1995 Olivier Award for st Comedy for **Mojo**. Phyllis Nagy won 1995 Writers' Guild Award for Best gional Play for **Disappeared**. Michael nne won the 1996 Meyer-Whitworth ard for **The Knocky**. Martin McDonagh n the 1996 George Devine Award, e1996 Writers' Guild Best Fringe Play ard, the 1996 Critics' Circle Award and 1996 Evening Standard Award for Most omising Playwright for **The Beauty Queen Leenane.** Marina Carr won the 19th san Smith Blackburn Prize (1996/7) for **rtia Coughlan**. Conor McPherson won 1997 George Devine Award, the 1997 itics' Circle Award and the 1997 Evening andard Award for Most Promising aywright for **The Weir.** Ayub Khan-Din n the 1997 Writers' Guild Award for Best st End Play, the 1997 Writers' Guild New iter of the Year Award and the 1996 John niting Award for **East is East**. Anthony ilson won the 1997 Writers' Guild Award Best Fringe Play for **The Censor**. The yal Court was the overall winner of the 95 Prudential Award for the Arts for eativity, excellence, innovation and cessibility. The Royal Court Theatre stairs won the 1995 Peter Brook Empty ace Award for innovation and excellence theatre.

Now in its temporary homes, the Duke of rk's and Ambassadors Theatres, during two-year refurbishment of its Sloane uare theatre, the Royal Court continues present the best in new work. After four cades the company's aims remain nsistent with those established by George vine. The Royal Court is still a major us in the country for the production of w work. Scores of plays first seen at the yal Court are now part of the national and ernational dramatic repertoire.

The Royal Court Theatre Bookshop

Located in the foyer of the Theatre Downstairs, the Royal Court Theatre bookshop is open most afternoons and evenings until after the evening performance.

It holds a wide range of theatre books, playtexts and film scripts - over 100 titles in all.

Many Royal Court Theatre playtexts are available for just £2. Among these are the recent productions of:

The Weir *- Conor McPherson*
I Am Yours *- Judith Thompson*
The Chairs *- Eugène Ionesco*
Never Land *- Phyllis Nagy*
Blue Heart *- Caryl Churchill*
The Censor *- Anthony Neilson*
East is East *- Ayub Khan-Din*
The Leenane Trilogy
(The Beauty Queen of Leenane
A Skull in Connemara
The Lonesome West)
- Martin McDonagh
Shopping and F£££ing
- Mark Ravenhill

The bookshop also sells polo shirts, record bags, mugs and chocolate.

Telephone enquiries can be made directly to the Bookshop Manager, Del Campbell, on 0171 565 5024.

Royal Court Theatre Downstairs
St Martin's Lane
London
WC2N 4BG

The Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square
Architects Haworth Tompkins

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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Julia Brodie
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We Need Your Support

e Royal Court Theatre, Sloane uare, was built in 1888 and is the gest-established theatre in gland with the dedicated aim of oducing new plays. We were illed to be awarded £16.2 million September 1995 - from the tional Lottery through the Arts uncil of England - towards the mplete renovation and restoration our 100-year old home. This ard has provided us with a unique portunity to redevelop this autiful theatre and building work already underway at the Sloane uare site. However, in order to ceive the full Lottery award, the yal Court must raise almost £6 lion itself as partnership funding wards the capital project.

e support of individuals, mpanies, charitable trusts and ndations is of vital importance to realisation of the redevelopment the Royal Court Theatre and we very grateful to those who have eady made a major contribution:

BSkyB Ltd
Double O Charity
Granada Group Plc
News International Plc
Pathé
Peter Jones
Quercus Charitable Trust
The Rayne Foundation
SA Art for Architecture Award Scheme
Basil Samuel Charitable Trust
The Trusthouse Charitable Foundation
he Woodward Charitable Trust

Our campaign to re-build the Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, is meeting with tremendous success: on-site, exciting transformations have taken place in the past year and the first major milestone of the project has been achieved with the end of the excavation work. The completion of all the excavations represents a significant point in the development programme: from now on we start re-building the Royal Court in earnest.

Meanwhile, the Stage Hands campaign - which was launched with the aim of raising over £500,000 from audience members and the general public, towards our £6 million target - has also passed a major milestone. We've now raised over £260,000 in donations and pledges and we are grateful to our many supporters who have so generously donated to the appeal.

However, we still have some way to go to reach our goal and each donation keeps the building work at Sloane Square moving forward: for example, a donation of £20 pays for 40 bricks, a donation of £50 pays for cedar panelling for the auditorium and a donation of £100 pays for two square meters of reclaimed timber flooring.

If you would like to help, or for further information, please contact the Development Office on 0171 565 5050

How the Royal Court is brought to you

The Royal Court (English Stage Company Ltd) is supported financially by a wide range of private companies and public bodies and earns the remainder of its income from the Box Office and its own trading activities.

The company receives its principal funding from the Arts Council of England, which has supported the Court since 1956. The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea gives an annual grant to the Royal Court Young People's Theatre and the London Boroughs Grants Committee contributes to the cost of productions in the Theatre Upstairs.

Other parts of the company's activities are made possible by sponsorship and private foundation support:

1993 saw the start of our association with the A.S.K Theater Projects of Los Angeles, which is funding a Playwrights Programme at the Royal Court.

1997 marks the third Jerwood Foundation Jerwood New Playwrights series, supporting the production of new plays by young writer.

1997 also sees the first Barclays New Stages - Staging the New season, with four productions and a stage design conference, promoting the exploration of innovation in form and staging.

We are grateful to all our supporters for their vital and on-going commitment.

TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS
The Baring Foundation
The Campden Charities
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Characters

Manny
Mary Annie
Ace
Bron
Marshall
Bri
Gruff
Mati
Dyfrig
Mr Entertainment
Keith
Patsy
Policeman
Chambermaid
Janitor

Setting

Set in an ever fluid landscape but based on the remaining half of a house whose other half has fallen into the sea. Dislocated, unreal, fantastic, functional, witty and full of possibility. Beds turn into cars, mountain becomes beach airport becomes supermarket, this world the underworld, shapes and structures bent and shaped to become something else. Transformation is everything, magic and invention vital. Dreams, myth and reality exist on the same plane as long as the sky doesn't fall down to earth.

Note

This script went to print before the opening night and may therefore differ slightly from the version performed.

Part One

Manny *wakes from a makeshift table in a sea of papers as* **Ace** *enters, rhythmically playing with a yo-yo. He stops.*

Ace I saw a woman . . .

Manny Where?

Ace Down on the beach . . .

Manny And?

Ace She said to me . . .

Bron *enters.*

Bron From where I was standing I thought you were dead.

Ace I'm not dead.

Manny Good boy.

Bron I was on the verge of calling the emergency services when you shifted your position. Dead men don't change position I said to myself, so I came down to see if you were all right.

Ace And I said I'm all right but things could be better.

Bron I see.

Ace Yes I said you see . . .

Bron What?

Ace Our house has fallen into the sea.

Bron Fuck.

Ace I know.

Bron I'm sorry.

Ace Forget it.

Bron It must be terrible.

Ace It is. (*Pause.*) It was once called a house in the country. Then it was called a house by the sea, then two weeks ago we had a bad storm and half our house fell into the sea and the other half stayed on land. I think it's called erosion. And then she said . . .

Bron I've seen you before too.

Ace Where?

Bron Up on the cliff. Staring out at the sea.

Ace When?

Bron Long time ago now. I was with my brother.

Ace I remember. It was summer.

Bron Yes.

Ace August the ninth.

Bron I can't be sure of the date.

Ace It was the ninth.

Bron It could have been.

Ace I keep a diary. I go out at night. I write down what I see. I like to think I see everything, but I obviously don't.

Bron No.

Ace Because until that night I'd never seen you before.

Bron I see.

Ace I'd like to think I'm the nightwatchman of this town but I suppose even a nightwatchman can't see everything.

Bron Even nightwatchmen make mistakes.

Ace They do.

Bron I turned to my brother and said I can see a man.

Lights go up on **Marshall** *sitting at his fishing rod.*

Marshall Where?

Bron Looking down on us.

Marshall Where?

Bron There, can you see him?

Marshall What's he doing out on the cliffs at this time of night?

Bron Who knows.

Marshall It can't be Bri.

Bron No.

Marshall He doesn't look like Bri.

Bron No.

Marshall I'd like it to be Bri.

Bron And me.

Marshall But it isn't.

Bron No.

Marshall Bri wouldn't stand up on the cliffs in the dark.

Bron Unless . . .

Marshall He wouldn't, Bron, he wouldn't.

Bron He's gone now anyway.

Ace I went home.

Bron Maybe he's lost.

Ace To write in my diary what I saw.

Bron I wonder who he was.

Ace (*to* **Manny**) You were sitting at the table surrounded by a sea of papers.

Manny 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991.

Bron Do you know him, Marshall?

Marshall I know his face.

Bron Who's his face?

Marshall Ace.

Bron Ace?

Marshall Ace. Hywel Ace. He's one of the Aces of Gaerlishe.

Bron Oh.

Marshall They say their house is going to fall into the sea.

Bron Their house?

Marshall Their house.

Bron The sea?

Marshall The sea, Bron, the fucking sea.

Manny Papers, journals, monthlies, weeklies, annuals, bi-annuals, comics, magazines and what for.

Ace To wrap our crockery in, Dad, what else.

Manny Crockery? Crockery? What the hell do you know about crockery?

Ace The council will come, Dad.

Manny The council, the council.

Ace They'll knock down our house.

Manny We'll keep an eye out for them.

Ace They'll come with warrants.

Manny We'll burn them.

Ace With eviction orders.

Manny We'll lock the door and won't let them in.

Ace They'll bring JCBs!

Manny OVER MY DEAD BODY. (*Pause.*) Did you see anyone out there?

Ace In town?

Manny On the mountains.

Ace NO.

Manny No one from the council snooping about?

Ace No one.

Manny Maybe it was the council that killed our chickens. If you see anyone from the council snooping around our chickens, you shoot first, ask questions later – capiche?

Ace Our chickens are dead, Dad.

Manny Capiche?

Ace Capiche, Dad, capiche. (*Pause.*) And then . . .

Mary Annie *enters pedalling a chair and wearing an eye-mask.*

Mary Annie Gurruga, gurruga, gurruga, no bell no lights can't see.

Ace My mother woke up.

Mary Annie Man? You there? I'm awake.

Manny Mmm.

Mary Annie I said I was awake.

Manny I know.

Mary Annie I haven't died.

Manny No.

Mary Annie Man?

Manny What?

Mary Annie I haven't died I said.

Manny I heard.

Mary Annie I'm still here.

Manny Yes.

Pause.

Mary Annie Man?

Manny I'm listening.

Mary Annie I can see the moon.

Manny Good.

Mary Annie It's lovely, go and have a look.

Manny I'm busy.

Mary Annie What you doing?

Manny I was dozing.

Mary Annie Liar.

Manny I was reading then I was dozing.

Mary Annie You're not in your chair.

Manny I am.

Mary Annie You're at the table.

Manny I'm not.

Mary Annie I can tell by your voice.

He moves back to the armchair.

Manny I'm in the chair.

Mary Annie Uh?

Manny I'm in the chair.

Mary Annie You moved.

Manny No.

Mary Annie Haven't you?

Manny No, it's your ears.

Mary Annie My external organs.

Manny You've got to wait for them to hear right.

Mary Annie Uh?

Manny You've been sleeping on one and not the other.

Mary Annie So?

Manny So the one you haven't slept on hasn't been tampered with.

Mary Annie Uh?

Manny The one you've been sleeping on's been squashed . . . so when you unsquash it, it takes quarter of an hour to hear properly through it.

Mary Annie Oh.

Manny That's why you thought I moved when I didn't.

Mary Annie Because of my ears.

Manny Yes.

Mary Annie The good ear was listening one way and the sleeping ear was getting itself sorted out.

Manny Yes.

Mary Annie It was acclimatising to the new conditions.

Manny Yes.

Mary Annie Getting its bearings.

Manny Yes.

Mary Annie Under different circumstances.

Manny Yes.

Mary Annie Like us.

Manny We're not moving.

Mary Annie You did.

Manny I never.

Mary Annie It wasn't my ears.

Manny It was.

Mary Annie You moved.

Manny No.

Pause.

Mary Annie We'll have to move. (*Pause.*) Man? We'll have to move. They'll make us move.

Manny We're not moving nowhere.

Mary Annie They'll make us.

Manny They can make us much as they want but we're not moving.

Mary Annie I don't want to move, Man.

Manny Nor me.

Mary Annie But we'll have to.

Manny No.

Mary Annie Our house will fall into the sea.

Manny So into the sea it will fall then.

Mary Annie But . . .

Manny We're not moving, Mary Annie.

Mary Annie Don't you Mary Annie me.

Manny I'll Mary Annie you as much as I want.

Mary Annie Huh.

Manny Mary Annie, Mary Annie, Mary Annie . . .

Mary Annie You never call me Wiff no more.

Manny Mary Annie.

Mary Annie Not since the monkey's parade.

Manny Mary Annie, Mary Annie, Mary Annie . . .

Mary Annie Only when you're angry. (*Pause.*) Mansell? Why don't you call me Wiff no more? Like you used to. (*Pause.*) Man? I like Wiff. Wiff is who I am. Wiff is the

mother of your child. (*Pause.*) Wiff is who I am. Wiff is me. Awake. Looking up at the moon. Full moon. Me and the fairies. Wiff and the fairies. (*Pause.*) Don't call me Mary Annie, Man. Call me Wiff. (*Pause.*) Man? Man?

Manny Wiff.

Mary Annie Thank you, Manny, good old Manny, brave old Manny stop the council moving us out before our house falls into the sea. (*She laughs.*)

Ace (*to* **Bron**) The name's Ace, Hywel Ace, but most people call me Ace.

Bron Bron.

Ace Growing up in a shrinking land next to a tantrum sea hasn't been easy, Bron.

Bron I can imagine.

Ace Every day I came home from school to find our house still standing was a victory. Small, but a victory is a victory.

Lights change as we go back in time to young **Ace**, **Manny** *and* **Mary Annie** *at the kitchen table.*

Manny If it carries on like this we'll lose half of Llanelli.

Mary Annie Which part?

Manny The ugly part.

Mary Annie Something good may come of it then.

Ace Is the sea going to eat our house, Dad?

Manny One day, boy, one day.

Mary Annie Eat your cabbage.

Ace On summer days when the sea was quiet I'd make up stories. Fantastic stories. Life in storyland I could control, the on-going war against the sea and real life I couldn't.

Mary Annie *plays a hymn on a casio.*

Mary Annie O Pam mae dicter o Myfanwy . . .

Manny Will you stop that.

Mary Annie It's Myfanwy.

Manny I don't care if it's Shirley bloody Bassey, it's getting on my nerves.

Ace And besides there were the fairies to think about.

At the table **Mary Annie** *is making Welsh cakes with young* **Ace**.

Ace What happens when we die, Mam?

Mary Annie Mm?

Ace Do we go to Heaven?

Mary Annie Maybe.

Ace Where's Heaven?

Mary Annie In the sky above the clouds.

Ace Can you see Heaven from a plane?

Mary Annie Who knows.

Ace Can we go on a plane to find out?

Mary Annie One day.

Ace Can we go today?

Mary Annie Not today, we got too much to do, pass me the sultanas.

Ace I love Welsh cakes I do, with loads of currants and sultanas.

Mary Annie So do the fairies.

Ace Where do fairies live?

Mary Annie Under the ground.

Ace In Hell?

Mary Annie No, who told you that?

Ace I don't know, but Heaven is in the sky and Hell is down below the ground.

Mary Annie Hell is somewhere else.

Ace Where?

Mary Annie Just somewhere else, that's all.

Ace That's what I think too, Mam, otherwise why would they put mamgu and tadcu in the ground. In Hell, they never done nothing wrong.

Mary Annie No.

Ace We put them in the ground so they can be with the fairies then?

Mary Annie Mmm . . .

Ace With Jesus and God. Is God a fairy, Mam?

Mary Annie God is a bad man.

Lights up on a graveyard where four small simple white crosses can be seen. **Mary Annie** *puts flowers on them.*

Mary Annie He took away four little angels before you came alone.

Ace Angels?

Mary Annie They would have been your brothers and sisters, but they were born with no breath. God took the breath away before they were born.

Ace So who gave me breath, Mam?

Mary Annie The fairies. I let them into my heart when God left me barren. You were a baby made by fairies, they came up from the underworld and put their hands on my belly. I saw them dance.

Music can be heard as we see fairies, angels and succubae dance.

Mary Annie Magical things can still happen in this cruel world, see. You've just got to know where to look, that's all.

Ace So I believed. In stories and mysteries and magic. Stories were good. Life had the sea and the council.

The angels and succubae evaporate as **Manny** *enters with a letter.*

Manny 'Regrettably, I have to inform you that the demolition of your property at a date convenient to yourselves is the only realistic solution. As I said in my letter dated March twelfth, surveyors' reports indicate that the cliff fronting your property are in a dangerously unstable condition, and any anti-erosion measures taken by this Council at this stage would not and indeed could not remedy the situation. Whilst I have every sympathy for you and your family's predicament I feel that I must endorse the decision made at Council, and firmly believe we are taking the safest and most cost-effective course of action. Yours sincerely, D. Watkins.'

Ace Bastards.

Mary Annie Revenge that's what it is.

Manny For what, we haven't got no quarrel with the council.

Mary Annie I'm not talking about the council . . . I'm talking about them.

Manny Who?

Mary Annie Them . . . Them under the ground, under the sea, under our feet, digging away, having parties, wanting revenge.

Ace Who, Mam?

Mary Annie The bloody fairies, the tylwyth teg. Your father dug up the field where they dance, now they won't come out.

Manny Don't be so soft, woman.

Mary Annie I'm not being soft, it's not the council we got to be afraid of, it's them. The council can't do nothing because it's our land, they can't chuck us out, but as for

the fairies . . . and the sea . . . that's a different matter.

Manny There are no fairies, mun.

Mary Annie I've seen them with my own eyes, my mother's seen them and her mother before that, they used our field, they danced on it till your father ploughed it all up, but they won't dance again till they've had their revenge on us. It's not the council we got to be afraid of, it's the fairies. They're in cahoots with the sea.

Ace There's always a time when you try and pinpoint the exact moment when things change. Like a commentator in a football match always asks if this or that incident is the significant moment, the point at which A wins and B loses. In our house it was getting the council letter. For mam it was the last straw.

Mary Annie I'm going to bed to wait. I'm not getting up till we move into a caravan and the fairies have had our house.

She exits.

Manny We got to keep an eye on her.

Ace I know.

Manny In the meantime we write back to the council telling them to bugger off and we're not moving nowhere. If they want to try and get us out they'll have to burn us out. From now on we're on a twenty-four-hour vigil.

Ace Vigil?

Manny *grabs a gun.*

Manny Vigil. Anyone you see walking the hills in a suit and tie you tell me about. Capiche?

Ace Not all the council wear ties mun, Dad.

Manny Capiche?

Lights change back to **Ace** *and* **Bron** *on the beach.*

Bron Capiche?

Ace That's what he said, means understand in Italian . . . or Spanish.

Manny Edward G. Robinson used to say it in gangster films.

Ace This is my story, Dad.

Manny I'm sorry, I'm sorry . . . continue.

Ace And then we stood there in silence watching the waves come in. I watched her push a stick into a dead jellyfish.

Manny Then?

Ace Then right out of the blue she said . . .

Bron Would you like to come for a drive with me?

Manny A drive?

Ace In her car.

Bron Because I've had a shitty day too. Maybe you want to come for a ride with me. I got a tinted glass blue Marina 1800 TC ready to drive into the heart of Saturday night.

Ace And I said that sounds great.

Bron Good. So let's drive.

Ace And so we drove. I didn't care where. Some people are born lucky; others are born to lose. I want me and Bron to be the lucky ones. In sixteen hours forty-eight minutes she's turned my world upside down and I know in my bones things are never going to be the same again.

Manny Marina?

Music plays as the set transforms into the James family's white-trash world. **Mati** *and* **Bron** *enter.*

Mati Bloody music.

Bron What music?

Mati On the TV.

Bron What music?

Mati *Sportsnight* with bloody Coleman, did you hear it?

Bron I heard it, yeh.

Mati I switched it off. I had to switch it off, I know we paid a lot for the aerial, but I had to switch it off. Bloody hate sport.

Bron It's not called that any more.

Mati What isn't?

Bron *Sportsnight* with Coleman.

Mati Uh?

Bron *Sportsnight* is now called with Desmond Lynam.

Mati Who's he?

Bron The older woman's crumpet.

Mati Crumpet?

Bron Tall, mid-forties, moustache, grey hair, just started wearing glasses.

Mati Never heard of him, and anyway, I switched it off as soon as I heard the music. Bloody music, bloody sport, bloody senseless kicking sweetbreads blown up round the field.

Bron What?

Mati That's what they used to be made of, innit?

Bron Bladders, Mam.

Mati Uh?

Bron Pig's bladders, not sweetbreads and anyway they're made of plastic now.

Mati Shows how much I know but who cares, it's still bloody stupid, running around after a ball in the rain, on a

Saturday afternoon, bootlaces, blood, bloody bandages and all for what? For a few pints in the club on a Saturday night, looking forward to the strippers on a Sunday with her fags and her oil to pour over herself from a Windolene bottle, I know, I seen them.

Bron When?

Mati Lorraine told me. I never been myself, it's men only. She gave it a go for a bit on a part-time basis, but the men didn't like the Windolene bottle, told her to get baby oil in a real baby-oil bottle, she packed it in after that.

Bron Lost her bottle, did she?

Mati You'd think with all the sprogs that she's got she wouldn't find getting a baby-oil bottle a problem. Five she's got, all under eight too. What did you say?

Bron I'll have to remember that.

Mati Remember what you want it's all bloody stupid, nothing makes sense to me no more. I mean look at your father, he still drinks in the Ship and Pilot even though they've ripped the guts out of the place. All he's ever done since whatsisname modernised it is complain. Why don't he go somewhere else, innit?

The father, **Gruff**, *enters.*

Gruff Because the Ship's the place I've always drunk, Mati, and my father did, and his father before that.

Mati But you don't like it no more.

Gruff Like it? It's bastard terrible.

Mati But they say all the furnishings are Laura Ashley.

Gruff Laura Ashley be buggered, it's a pub not a bastard country kitchen pretending to be a country kitchen with flowers and curtains and fancy little alcoves with plasterboard and ply, it's all crap. And it's not even wood.

It's fucking joke wood. WHO THE FUCK ARE THEY TRYING TO KID?

Enter **Mr Entertainment** *as we go to the Ship and Pilot pub.*

Mr Entertainment If you don't like it, why don't you piss off down the road?

Gruff Don't worry, I'm going, I'm going. Fuck your beer, fuck your pub. FUCK YOU!

Gruff *exits.*

Mr Entertainment Miserable git, who the fuck wants people like that in the place? Pub was dying 'til I got hold of it. Old fuckers drinking three pints and pissing over the floor of the toilet. No music. No crack. TV on in the corner, fucking dominoes with faded dots. Dotless dominoes, wonder them old fuckers could see them. Play from memory half of them did. Put a penny on the pint they go on strike. Drink stout from a bottle, well, them days are gone. Them days are fucking gone. I got the new Ship and the old Ship, not a domino in sight – new Ship for the youngsters and the dull fuckers. Bingo six thirty to seven thirty, then karaoke from eight 'til half nine, rave disco with an extended licence 'til one o'clock, fucking lovely, fucking gorgeous, E-ed out, bottled water, bubbly water, that's when I bring it out, goes like fuck with the youngsters too when the dull fuckers take E and whisky, shag their brains completely. But I don't care, I got Honest Bri on the door to sort out the fighting, my daughter Cindy running the fucking fish-and-chip shop – we are raking it in. FUCKING RAKING WE ARE. MR ENTERTAINMENT, THAT'S ME. But I got to go, the bingo's about to start. Call in if you're passing. We'll always keep a welcome. And remember, you'll have a FUCKING BALL. RIGHT, YOU SUCKERS, EYES DOWN FOR A FULL HOUSE. LET'S BE HAVING YOU.

He exits.

Mati But he keeps going there.

Bron Habit.

Mati Habit, habit. 'Bout time he changed his bloody habits, cos if he's not in the Ship he's in work, bloody Ship, bloody work, between the two of them I never see him. I tell you, Bron, I can't take no more, it's all gone nuts, it's all gone crazy, nothing makes sense any more, the world's darts don't reach all the way to the dartboard any more.

She exits.

Bron *sits at a check-out counter in the supermarket.*

Bron And I suppose she's got a point too but this town is no different to loads of other towns around the place, around the world if it comes to that, and this family's just the same too, give or take a few things. I mean we may be on the extreme side of things but the principle's the same. Secrets and lies. A fucked-up past. Maybe if we faced up to the past then maybe we wouldn't find the world so confusing.

A supervisor (**Keith**) *enters and leans close to* **Bron** *as she works.*

Keith Everything all right, check-out one?

Bron Yes thanks, just fine.

An element of sexual harassment is evident in this exchange. **Bron** *resents it,* **Keith** *loves it.* **Keith** *smiles knowingly.*

Keith Good . . . good.

Bron But it ain't easy. I mean, how do I explain my brother Bri, or my brother Marshall. Or come to that, my boss Keith?

Bron *swings her bag on to her shoulder and turns to exit the staff room when* **Keith** *blocks her. He is too close for comfort.*

Keith Flying solo tonight?

Bron Listen, Keith. When a woman takes a pack of Coco-Pops home with her at night, it's a pretty sure sign that she wants to be alone.

Keith Bitch.

Bron A cryptic comment is the only way to leave a nobody supermarket supervisor in smalltown. It preserves a woman's mystery, gives her that distance, that possibility. It makes people wonder long into their feathery beds what a girl like me is doing in a place like this. And the answer? Family.

A car starts up and we hear it pull away. **Bron** *exits as the supermarket clears to reveal* **Bri** *standing alone.*

Bri Crack. The sound of wood snapping. It's the first thing I remember. Then nothing. Then a splash. I must have been about ten. Bron was seven and Marsh must have been about seven.

Bron Has Batman got nipples?

Bri Yes.

Bron How do you know?

Marshall Cos he's a man, Bron.

Bron He's a bat.

Bri He's a man who turns into a bat when there's trouble.

Marshall That's why they call him Batman.

Bron But not a real bat?

Bri No. A man with a bat's special powers.

Marshall Bats hang upside down in caves.

Bri In the night.

Marshall They come out at night.

Bron But they can't drive cars?

Marshall No.

Bron Only people drive cars.

Marshall Yeh.

Bron Do bats have nipples?

Marshall Uh?

Bron Bri?

Bri No.

Bron Neither has Batman.

Marshall He has.

Bron So he can't be a man.

Bri Batman's a man, Bron, and men have nipples.

Bron So why can't I see them?

Marshall Cos he's wearing his bat costume, if you took off his costume you'd see his nipples.

Bron But it won't come off, he's not like Action Man, you can take off Action Man's costume, see – look.

Marshall Who told you you could play with my Action Man?

Bron I wasn't playing with him.

Marshall So how do you know you can take off his costume?

Bron Stop it, Marshall, I was only . . . Tell him, Bri, he's picking on me.

Bri He's not.

Bron He is. I haven't touched his Action Man. I was only . . .

Bri So what's it doing in your hand, Bron?

Bron I was only showing you, that's all.

Marshall Give him here.

Bron No.

Marshall Give him here.

Snatches it from her.

Bron Bully. I hate you, Marshall James. I'm never going to play with you again.

Bron *walks into the shadows.*

Bri Bron ran back to the house, leaving me and Marshall talking. I was close to him them. Me and him were inseparable. That day out of the blue I grabbed his hand and cut his finger with a knife.

Marshall Ahh . . . what you do that for?

Bri *cuts his finger and joins it to his brother's.*

Bri Me and you are blood brothers now, Marsh.

Marshall Uh.

Bri Means we'll always look after each other, right.

Marshall Right . . . but we're already brothers, Bri, I got your blood in me already.

Bri It's the ritual, Marsh, the ritual. And we went down to the rocks at the foot of the estuary. We made ourselves a batcave. In the roots of an old tree. The tide was coming in but we were two batmen in search of sanctuary, too busy on a mission to notice. Marsh went first, climbing into the roots of the tree. Then I heard the crack of snapping wood. Then . . . saw him fall.

Marshall I went under. My feet touched the bottom. I looked up, the sun streaming in through the green water. I could see Bri's red jumper. I went back up, tried to shout but nothing came out, only water, I went under again, something pulling me down, deeper and deeper. I don't remember any panic. Just peace. I looked up again. I saw a stick come through the surface.

Bri Grab hold of it, grab hold of it . . .

Marshall But I couldn't reach.

Bri MARSHALL. MARSHALL . . .

Marshall I was moving further away. I couldn't see the stick any more and I couldn't see Bri. I was on my own. In my wellingtons, trousers and a green jumper with a Batman badge. I wasn't afraid. It was peaceful. Sometimes I wish I could have stayed there. Under the green water. Looking up at the sun. Floating for ever and for ever. Dead.

Lights come up on **Bron** *and* **Mati** *in the house.* **Bri** *runs in breathless.*

Bri Quick, quick, it's Marshall. He's fallen in.

Mother What?

Bri In the river, he couldn't reach . . . HURRY, MAM, HURRY, HURRY!

Mati *and* **Bri** *exit.* **Bron** *remains alone.*

Bron I never moved. I don't know why. Maybe it was shock. The next thing I can remember is jumping up and down hysterical until dad came and shook me telling me to stop.

Gruff *enters in his abattoir clothes.*

Gruff I was just coming in. I heard Bron screaming and I saw Bri and Mati run down towards the river. By the time I got to the river everything was over.

Mati He was floating towards the sea. On his back. He looked peaceful. I loved him. He was my son. I walked straight into the river.

Bri But I knew mam couldn't swim. I stood on the bank watching my mother and brother drown.

Mati I reached him and held up his head. I don't think I panicked. I wanted to die with him. I loved him. He was my son.

Bri Then out of nowhere two people came. Strangers I'd never seen before, a man and a woman. They dived in, pulling out my mother and brother. Mam was still breathing but Marshall was dead. The man kept shouting

save the woman, save the woman, the boy's lost. The woman stopped trying to save Marshall and helped the man save mam. I looked at Marshall lying dead on the bank. His heart had stopped beating. I could hear mam coughing and bringing up water. Then I don't know why, but I kissed him. Harder and harder, I blew air into his mouth, harder and harder, I pushed at his chest and I kissed him harder and harder and then his chest moved and I tasted water. He was alive.

Gruff The strangers helped Mati back to the house, I carried Marshall in my arms, they called the doctor and by the time he came, colour was coming back into Marsh's body. He was blue. Except round his belly button. He was going to live.

Bri He was still unconscious but the doctor said he'd be all right. He had to give Bron an injection for shock. People came from the other houses to see if we were all right too. Mam sat with a blanket by the fire and then she said . . .

Mati Where is the man and the woman?

Bri And everyone looked round, but there was no sign of them.

Mati Who were they and where did they come from, Bri?

Bri I don't know, Mam, I've never seen them before.

Mati We never had a chance to thank them for what they've done.

Bri But we never heard from them. Dad tried to find out who they were, but nobody knew.

Gruff Angels.

Bri Said my father.

Bron Fairies.

Bri Said Bron. But nobody knew.

Gruff He wasn't meant to die, that's all. Someone was looking after him. Marshall James is a very lucky boy.

Mati He's a special boy.

Gruff Special.

Bri And I watched them look at him in his bed. I heard them tend to him as he threw up the dregs of the river all night. He wasn't just Marshall James no more. He was special. He was Jesus. He was an angel. They told him he was. He had a future. They all thought so. Mam, dad, Bron. Nobody said anything to me. I never made the papers. 'Strangers save mother and son in estuary drama' said the headline. They all forgot me. I kissed him back to life that night and nobody gave me the credit for it. The strangers saw it, but they disappeared. I tried to tell dad what happened but he just said . . .

Gruff We all know what happened, Bri, now don't tell lies. Lying will get you nowhere in this world.

Bri So I said no more about it. He was my brother before that day. My blood brother. And now he wasn't. He was special. And I hated him for it. Drowning would have preserved my love for him. Living made love impossible. It moved the goal posts. I should have let him die. Why the fuck didn't I let him die? I lost a brother that day and I still fucking miss him.

Bron Things were never the same in our house after that. Marshall got the angel treatment with milk and Jaffa Cakes on the settee. I carried on trying to think everything was normal when I knew in my bones it wasn't and Bri became the black sheep of the family, simple as that. What foxed me was that it was our angel Marshall not Bri who axed twenty-four of Dyfrig's lambs to death two and a half years ago. Never touched the ewes, only the lambs. Very dark, very strange, very Welsh.

Marshall I did it cos I didn't fit in. Mrs Conti said.

Bron She ran Conti's Café in the Square. Known as

Conti in Italy but Sonti in Wales. I put it down to the Methodists.

Marshall I walked into the caff. Jocks's on the square. I pushed the door open, heard the bell ring, saw Jock's ma look up from behind the sweets, saw the boys watching Paula then watching me. His fingers still on the flipper, the silver ball hanging in time, the machine waiting for me to say something. Paula waiting for me to say something. The boys waiting for me to say something. Jock's ma in mid sup of her sweet waiting for me to say something . . . so I said it. All right, Paula, how's it going like and I slapped him on the back, the ball flew past the flippers, Paula turns and calls me a fucking wanker. Game over. He holds me up against the wall. His face is red, you prick, he says, you stupid fucking prick. Then he butts me. I go down. Paula walks out, the boys follow. I see them through blurred, watery eyes. My nose bleeds. Jock's ma comes over to me with a tissue, here, she says, wipe your face. I wipe my face. I'm sorry . . . I say. But I really try, Mrs Conti . . . I really try. You don't fit in, boy, that's your trouble. Your words is wrong. Your language. Here, wipe your face. I wipe my face. Why innit? Fucking why? What do you say, Bri?

Bri *doesn't respond.*

Lights go up on **Mati** *and* **Gruff**.

Gruff Why?

Mati Why?

Gruff When he had everything going for him. How can they call him a psychopath if he's got hobbies?

Mati Who knows.

Gruff I mean HE CAN TIE FUCKING FLIES. COCHABONDEES.

Mati Maybe we spoilt him.

Gruff Spoilt him? He was special, mun, Mati, he died

then he came back to life. He was like fucking Jesus.

Mati Don't swear.

Gruff He didn't come back to life to axe Dyfrig's newborn lambs to death, did he? Did he?

Mati No.

Gruff So how am I ever going to show my face in the Ship from now on?

Mati You hate the Ship.

Gruff I'll have to drink in the bastard Butch now, fucking hell, fucking, fucking hell.

He exits.

Mati (*to* **Bri**) And what are you looking at? It wasn't my fault. None of it is my fault.

Bri No.

Mati I've loved you as much as I've loved your brother.

Bri Yeh.

Mati Wasn't me who called him an angel. It was your father.

Bri I know. (*Pause.*) Mam?

Mati What?

Bri I've bought a new car.

Mati You stupid bugger, on whose money?

Bri It didn't cost much. I can do it up.

Mati But we already got a car, your father's car.

Bri I know but I wanted a car I can call my own. I'd like us to go for a drive in it, me, you, dad, Bron, Marshall, all of us.

Mati What for?

Bri Because I got something I want to tell you.

Mati Tell me now.

Bri Now isn't the time, Mam. I want to tell everyone the same time. And not in this house. Somewhere else.

Mati Like where?

Bri Somewhere.

Mati Somewhere?

Bri Yeh.

Mati I'll see what your father says. I'm off to the bingo. See you after.

Mati *exits.*

Bron But we never went on that trip, not as a family anyway. Me and Bri went to the airport once, that's all. Then three days later he was banned for drink-driving. He never drove that car again.

Lights up on a prison cell.

Bri I'm not a sad fucking bastard. I'm not a suicide. I'm not a beam swinger. I'm not a piece of shit . . . I am not a piece of old rope, I ain't hung, I AIN'T FUCKING DEAD. I ain't the circus, I ain't the act, I ain't the flying trapeze. I'm Brian Fucking James. I drive a blue tinted glass Marina 1800 TC into the heart of Saturday night, you fucks.

Policeman Did.

Bri What?

Policeman Did.

Bri Uh?

Policeman Drive a Marina. Blow test positive. Piss test positive, blood test positive. Three-card trick. Put an advert in the *Echo*, motoring. Thursdays. You're nicked. (*He slams door.*)

Bri *sits in the cell.*

Bron And that's the last time we saw him. He walked out of the police station and disappeared into thin air. At first we thought he'd gone on walkabout and lost all track of time. I mean Bri was useless with time and he went off for a couple of weeks without telling anyone before that. Turned out he'd been to Old Trafford to watch Man. United play, then the cops found him wandering around the perimeter fence of the airport and brought him home. But he was different. And Marshall was different and the house was different. Everything was different. And I was different too. Some people think he's dead. (**Bri** *laughs.*) Some people say they've seen him. (**Bri** *laughs.*) Some people say he's gone with Gunn to Australia to deliver pizzas in Queensland. But nobody knows.

Bri Nobody knows, nobody knows.

Bri *exits laughing.*

Bron Two years is a long time. Dad and Marshall don't go fishing together any more. Mam still can't work out why the world's darts don't reach the dartboard any more, and I moved to town for my job because I didn't want people to talk any more. (*Pause.*) I got to keep the blue tinted glass Marina 1800 TC that I like to drive into the heart of Saturday night.

Ace *enters.*

Ace August the ninth. Summer. A heat wave the day I first saw her.

Sound of a car revving up and pulling away. Lights change to a park, the atmosphere throbs with jungle music and youth.

Ace Teenagers drink Hooch in the park. Not dark yet. I hear them argue about labels, designer labels.

Voice 1 Bilabong.

Voice 2 Swatch.

Voice 3 Animal.

Voice 4 Armani.

Voice 1 Hugo fuckin' Boss.

Voice 2 Slag.

Voice 3 Donna Karan.

Voice 4 Nike.

Voice 1 Cunting Adidas.

Voice 2 Reebok.

Voice 3 Gucci.

Voice 4 Puma.

Voice 1 Calvin Bastard Klein.

Voice 2 Pants, perfume or both?

Voice 1 Who cares. IT'S A NAME AND IT'S ALL IN THE NAME!

Voice 2 YOUR NAME AIN'T CALVIN FUCKING KLEIN. It's Adrian Parry.

Voice 1 Fuck off.

Voice 2 Fuck off yourself.

Ace They fight, they make up, they fight again, drink Hooch, share E. Get warm. The watered Es lie back and look up at the stars. The E-less only drunk start to bicker and move away.

Voice 3 Leighton. (*Pause.*) Lei . . . gh . . . ton.

Voice 4 Come on if you're coming.

Voice 3 I'm coming, I'm coming.

Voice 4 So fucking 'urry up, mun.

Voice 3 I am 'urrying I am. Do you love me?

Voice 4 Uh?

Voice 3 You heard.

Voice 4 For fuck's sake, Patsy mun.

Voice 3 Because I FUCKING LOVE YOU, YOU SHED. (*Pause.*) Leighton . . . wait . . . LEIGHTON!

Ace But Leighton drives away on a Kawasaki 125. Leighton's lover, Patsy, less than a beauty joins the other E-less now smoking Regal at the foot of the H. Patsy gets drunk and sad. She's only seventeen but already the prison bars are crowding her head.

Patsy I ain't got no roots. I ain't got no morality. I ain't got no religion. I ain't got no family. I ain't got no values. I ain't got no hopes. I ain't got no desires but you know the worst of it is, man . . . ?

Voice 4 What?

Patsy I ain't got no dreams.

Voice 4 Straight up?

Patsy Straight up. I don't know what the fuck's happened to them, man, but they ain't up there in my head no more.

Voice 4 Where did they go, Patsy?

Patsy Go?

Voice 4 Yeh, man, like where did they go to?

Patsy They never went anywhere, man, they were never there in the first place.

Voice 4 That's heavy.

Patsy That's true.

Voice 4 You must want something.

Patsy Wanting and dreaming are two different things, man, I mean I want to win the Lottery but I don't dream about it, a: because I probably won't win it, and b: if I win it, it still won't be dreaming, man, it'll be real and the problem is that what's real . . . what's real right, what's real right . . . (*Pause.*) I hate the real me. All that's real is a heap of shit, man. Real means shopping, shitting, bleeding, freezing, boiling, all the things you have to put up with.

I've had it with putting up with things, man. Putting up with things. Fuck it. Fuck all of it.

Voice 4 Dying?

Patsy Dying? What's that?

Voice 4 Means . . .

Patsy I know what it means man, and I couldn't give two fucks 'bout it. Dying means end game exit. Stop. No go. End. Bra-fucking-vo.

Voice 4 So?

Patsy So?

Voice 4 So what's the answer?

Patsy Who gives a fuck. Just give me the fucking drugs. (*She grabs the stuff off him. Takes two.*) Now fuck me. Fuck my cunt, my head, my mouth, my arse, my nose, my ears, my eyes, my fucking everything. (*He doesn't move.*) Fuck me Baz. (*Pause.*) Fuck me. FUCK ME!

Ace And they fuck. Somewhere in the bushes by the river. The man from number 48 passes, dragging his dog Tyson for a walk. A ritual. I spoke to him once. Said he worked for the railways. Said if it wasn't for his dog he'd . . . his eyes filled up. I looked away. I just love the dog he says. (*Pause.*) I cross the road and over the Teddy Bear bridge up to the mountains behind Pelican, overlooking the sea. I roll myself a spliff and look down at the waves. I see a bloke fishing at first. I can't make him out then I see it's Marshall James, the axeman of the innocent. Dyfrig the Garth once told me he lost a new season's flock.

Enter **Dyfrig** *into a hell of a Ship and Pilot disco bar.*

Dyfrig Terrible things are being done to our sheep, Ace.

Ace I know, Dyf, I know.

Dyfrig They're the future of the flock, Ace.

Ace I know, Dyf, I know.

Dyfrig Slaughtered and still wet they are, Ace.

Ace It's terrible, Dyf, terrible.

Dyfrig If I catch whoever's doing it, Ace, I'll blow their fucking brains out with both barrels.

Ace I know, Dyf.

Dyfrig I wouldn't ask no questions, Ace.

Ace No.

Dyfrig I wouldn't hesitate.

Ace No.

Dyfrig Blam fuckin' blam. I'd watch him drop like a stone. You wouldn't know nothing about it, would you, Ace?

Ace Come off it, Dyf, that isn't my line. I'm an erudite fucker.

Dyfrig Like into glue?

Ace No, Dyf.

Dyfrig Do you sniff it, like Locktite?

Ace No, Dyf, it's just a word.

Dyfrig A word, right.

Ace Words are beautiful, Dyf, they conjure up things.

Dyfrig Like a magician?

Ace Yeh . . . like take the word docile . . .

Dyfrig Docile . . .

Ace Don't you think that's a fucking perfect word?

Dyfrig In what way perfect?

Ace In what it conjures up . . . let it run over your tongue, Dyf . . . d . . . o . . . c . . . ile, try it. D . . . o . . . c . . . ile . . .

Dyfrig D . . . o . . . c . . . ile . . .

Ace What you reckon?

Dyfrig I reckon it's all right.

Ace All right, fuckin' hell, Dyf, it was BEAUTIFUL.

Dyfrig Keep your fucking voice down, Ace, we don't want everyone to hear.

Ace Why not, Dyf, don't you like people to know you play with words?

Dyfrig Only words I know.

Ace Like what?

Dyfrig Fuck off.

Ace What else.

Dyfrig Shag.

Ace You like that, Dyf.

Dyfrig And cunt.

Ace Cunt.

Dyfrig Cunt. Women's cunts. And lips and arse . . . and cock.

Ace Cock.

Dyfrig Cock and cunt.

Ace They go together.

Dyfrig Yeh. In and out.

Ace That's beautiful, Dyf.

Dyfrig I know.

Ace I can see your mind looking at the picture . . . you're dreaming, man. One word and all of a sudden you're there . . . fucking.

Dyfrig Yeh.

Ace In and out.

Dyfrig Yeh.

Ace Fast and slow.

Dyfrig Yes, Ace, yes.

Ace Faster and faster.

Dyfrig Yeh.

Ace Slower and slower.

Dyfrig Fu-uck.

Ace You're on the edge, Dyf.

Dyfrig I know, man, I know.

Ace So is she.

Dyfrig Yeh.

Ace She's screaming, Dyf.

Dyfrig Yeh.

Ace And you are.

Dyfrig Yeh.

Ace In and out, in and out, faster and faster and faster and faster and FASTER AND FASTER AND YOU'RE THERE DYF FUCKING RELEAAAASED.

Dyfrig *screams at the top of his voice. The other people in the pub stare at him. They put down their glasses, the music cuts, then silence.* **Dyfrig** *slowly recovers, breathless. He looks around at the shocked faces. He gets up. Looks around him.*

Pause.

Dyfrig I am beautiful. I am fucking beautiful. (*Pause.*) You might not be able to see it . . . but I am. It's written all over my face. But nobody can see it, only Ace. When I step out on to the street people say there he goes. What an ugly bastard. His past is only acne and boils. Fuck how he must have worried as a boy. Poor boy, pity poor boy, farmer boy.

Voice 1 He's got the face of an unexploded experiment.

Dyfrig Yes.

Voice 1 Chemical

Dyfrig Yes.

Voice 2 Volatile.

Dyfrig Yes.

Voice 1 Unstable.

Dyfrig Yes.

Voice 1 Unwatchable.

Dyfrig Yes, yes, yes, say it, say it, say it. FUCKING SAY IT. DON'T BEAT ABOUT THE BASTARD BUSH!

Voice 1 Unkissable.

Dyfrig Yeeeeesssss . . . (*Pause.*) Unkissable (*Pause.*) I watched angels undress through broken glass. A state school. Run down. Unboarded. The chaste hid behind raincoats. The confident chattered as they took off ties and shirts and skirts. They bent down to tie shoelaces. I licked my unkissable lips. Mouths are a weakness in our family. Ulcers, cold sores, braces, extractions, fillings. A love of confectionery. A sweet shop. The changing room. Through broken glass the sweets of changing girls. Making women. Not looking at me. Looking through me. Beyond. I could have licked and sucked at their bodies. I would have put my damaged head through broken glass for them. But didn't. I did when I got the courage but by then the changing room was empty. School was out. Only me and the janitor remained.

Janitor *enters.*

Janitor You got the face of a chemical experiment, boy.

Dyfrig I know.

Janitor Have you tried alcohol.

Dyfrig Yes.

Janitor Not in a glass, in a bowl.

Dyfrig Bowl?

Janitor Jameson's. Pour in the bottle in a bowl. Then put in your head. Hold it in there for as long as you dare. Then repeat.

Dyfrig I did as he said.

Janitor If you can't change the future of a man's face, what chance society?

Janitor *exits.*

Dyfrig *puts his head in a bowl and screams.*

Dyfrig Fuck. Gulled, me. By a janitor, what do I do. The sweets have left the sweetshop for their tea, only me. I mean I remain. Who the fuck am I? A boy? A farmer's boy. A man? A half man? Beast? Angel? Demon? Member of the underworld? Men who leave prison and change their appearance? Plastic surgery. Did they begin by putting poisoned heads in Irish whiskey? While still wearing prison clothes? While still on the run? Is Ronnie Biggs the great sixties train robber a different man in Brazil than he was in London town when he cavorted on the beach with Sid and Johnny, the Sex Pistols. Who killed Bambi? Did he begin his transformation by putting his head in whiskey? Before dyeing his hair? Growing a moustache? Changing the geography of his face? How will we shed rocks to become men in the twenty-first century? (*Pause.*) Uh? (*Pause.*) Uh? These are the things I think about when you all pass me in the street, see. I'm not ugly. I am beautiful. (*Pause.*) But none of you notice. (*Pause.*) Only Ace. Hywel Ace, whose house one day will fall into the sea. The chronicler of these times. Tonight will appear in his DIARY, won't it, Ace?

Ace Sure thing, Dyf.

Dyfrig Home he'll go, write it all in. Record it. August

the ninth. Summer. Hope the sea won't get it when it comes. Lose it. I hope they'll find it in the ruins of his house. Stuffed into his album sleeves. His records. Because we were before records. Vinyl forgot us. A chronicle of smalltown. Small thoughts. Small heads. But not all of us. (*Pause.*) Some of us are beautiful. Not only me. But you can't see it. (*Pause.*) You can't see it. You just can't see it. (*Pause.*) Let me get pregnant by the spunk of a fairy I say. From the underground. The otherworld. Then you might think me beautiful. (*Pause.*) Good night, Ace.

Ace Good night, Dyf.

Dyfrig Good night, all.

Dyfrig *exits in silence, shutting the door.*

Voice 1 Well.

Voice 2 Well, well.

Voice 3 Well, well, well.

Voice 4 Well, well, well, well.

All Well, well, well, well, well, well, well.

Pause.

Voice 3 Do you know that Davies is back at fly-half at the age of thirty-four?

Voice 1 Oggi oggi oggi . . .

All Oi oi oi . . .

Voice 1 Oggi oggi oggi . . .

All Oi oi oi . . .

Voice 1 Oggi . . .

All Oi . . .

Voice 1 Oggi . . .

All Oi . . .

Voice 1 Oggi oggi oggi . . .

All Oi oi oi . . .

Fade in music as they all sing along to it drunkenly before leaving the stage to leave **Ace** *alone. Fade in the sound of the sea.*

Ace And then I saw her. Playing with a yo-yo walking towards the axeman of smalltown. I never knew Marshall had a sister. Mind you, I only knew about Marshall because everyone else did. He was in the papers.

Marshall *sits at the edge of the beach with a fishing rod.* **Bron** *enters with a yo-yo.* **Ace** *observes.*

Marshall Stop fucking looking at me.

Pause.

Bron I'm not.

Marshall You are.

Bron Who'd look at you?

Marshall Tart.

Bron What?

Marshall Tart is what you are with your yo-yo and face painted and gum.

Bron Yeh.

Marshall Yes . . . and what's with the dainty walking.

Bron Dainty?

Marshall Yes dainty . . . who do you think you are, the bally?

Bron That what?

Marshall The fucking swans on the lake with the tutus and pointy toes . . . I seen them, I've fucking seen them.

Bron It's ballet, Marsh.

Marshall Uh?

Bron Ballet not bally.

Marshall Fuck off, what do you know, fucking tart with the clapping and the dickies and the hoi bastard polloi . . . I seen you.

Bron Seen me what?

Marshall Looking at their balls.

Bron So?

Marshall So I'm your fucking brother.

Bron I didn't know you cared.

Marshall I don't.

Bron So what's the problem?

Marshall There isn't.

Bron Good. Because it's none of your business.

Marshall Fuck off.

Pause.

Bron Caught anything?

Marshall Only crabs, why?

Bron Funny.

Marshall Is it?

Bron Yeh, because you haven't thrown your line in.

Marshall So?

Bron How can you catch any fish if you don't throw your line in?

Marshall Because I'm not fucking interested that's why.

Bron So why do you do it?

Marshall Because it gives me time to think, and it gets me out of that fucking house.

Bron Maybe you should move away.

Marshall To where?

Bron Anywhere. Make a fresh start.

Marshall What's the point?

Bron What's the point staying here? (*Pause.*) Everybody thinking you're a psycho.

Marshall Shut up. (*Pause.*) I'm not a fucking psycho.

Bron I don't think the lambs will agree with you.

Marshall I NEVER FUCKING DID IT ALL RIGHT.

Pause.

Bron So why did you confess? (*Pause.*) Blame it on Paula Brown. (*Pause.*) If you never did it? (*Pause.*) Marsh?

Marshall I never did it.

Bron So who you covering up for? (*Pause.*) Marshall? (*Pause.*) Marshall, answer me.

Marshall I can't.

Bron Answer me.

Marshall I CAN'T RIGHT, I FUCKING CAN'T. (*Pause.*) If you want to know the answer you'll have to ask Bri.

Bron Bri's gone, Marsh . . .

Marshall Not for good.

Bron Two years is a long time.

Marshall I know it's a long time, but he'll be back, he hasn't gone for ever, I know he'll be back, he's got to come back, Bron, for my sake . . . he's got to tell them the truth.

Pause.

Bron Tell who the truth, Marsh.

Marshall Everyone . . . he fucking owes me it, he fucking owes me, Bron. He owes me.

Bron *puts her arm around him.*

Marshall I never did it, Bron. Everything I did I did because I fucking loved him. He pulled me out of the river, he kissed life back into my lungs, he's my brother, my blood brother. I've got his blood in me and he's got my blood in him. Why the FUCK DOES HE STILL HATE ME. WHY, BRON, WHY? (*Pause.*) I only ever said I did it to win him back. He knows that. SO WHY THE FUCK DID HE GO AWAY? WHY THE FUCK DID THE BASTARD HAVE TO GO AWAY?

Ace Then she saw me. She was beautiful. An apparition. A fucking angel. I couldn't take my eyes off her. She was a myth, a fucking fairy from the underworld. I always wanted to believe in the underworld but I could never find the key, the door in the rock that would lead me to it. But there it was in front of me all along. It was just that I couldn't see it before. Maybe tonight would be the night that the underworld comes out into the real world and invites it to dance.

Fade up music as a whole range of angels, demons and succubae enter the stage, made up from the voices and dialogue of the earlier park scene but distorted, made more beautiful, more erotic and more choreographed. **Ace** *joins in, as do* **Bron** *and* **Marshall** *in a wild masque of the underworld which builds to a climax and the music cuts, freezing the action. Slowly the stage clears leaving an exhausted* **Ace**.

Ace Or maybe I was just stoned. I got home and found dad surrounded in a sea of papers.

Lights up on **Mary Annie** *and* **Manny**.

Manny Hailstones in Builth Wells the size of golf balls.

Ace *laughs.*

Mary Annie Uh?

Manny HAILSTONES, MARY ANNIE, HAILSTONES.

Mary Annie What's he laughing at?

Ace Angels and fairies.

Mary Annie What about them?

Ace I love them.

Mary Annie And me (*Pause.*) Where?

Manny Builth Wells.

Mary Annie At this time of year?

Manny Not now, then.

Mary Annie When?

Manny 1969.

Mary Annie Uh?

Manny Hailstones in Builth Wells the size of golf balls.

Mary Annie What else?

Manny Wellingtons for sale.

Mary Annie Wellingtons?

Manny Green ones. If I had the money then I got now, I'd have bought a pair.

Mary Annie And corsets?

Manny Uh?

Mary Annie Are they selling corsets?

Manny What you asking me for?

Mary Annie I need a corset.

Manny I'm not reading about corsets, I'm reading about golf balls.

Mary Annie Turn to corsets.

Manny Mary Annie, mun.

Mary Annie Go on, see what price they are.

Manny No.

Mary Annie Please.

Manny Read it yourself.

Mary Annie I haven't got my glasses.

Manny You don't wear glasses.

Mary Annie I do.

Manny Uh?

Mary Annie It's you that don't wear glasses.

Manny I do, I'm wearing them, only for reading.

Mary Annie They'll be mine.

Manny Uh?

Mary Annie Have a look. (*He takes off his glasses.*) Have you looked?

Manny I'm looking now.

Mary Annie And . . .

Manny Hard to tell.

Mary Annie They're mine.

Manny Haven't got your name on them.

Mary Annie You don't put your name on glasses.

Manny Look like men's glasses to me.

Mary Annie Mine they are.

Manny Like spyglasses.

Mary Annie Spyglasses?

Ace Like *Get Carter* glasses, Mam.

Mary Annie Get who?

Ace Carter, Michael Caine, spies, Russia, wore glasses like those.

Mary Annie Who did?

Ace Michael Caine did.

Mary Annie When?

Manny In the film, mun woman, in the film.

Mary Annie What film?

Manny He just told you, Christ mun Mary Annie, you don't listen to a word nobody says.

Mary Annie Uh?

Manny Not a word.

Mary Annie I'm listening.

Manny Don't know why we bother.

Mary Annie Listen to the listen I am.

Manny We try to explain, but . . .

Mary Annie I'm listening . . . I'M LISTENING . . . Manny?

Manny 1961 . . . 1971 . . . 1981 . . . 1991.

Ace I went upstairs and watched the ants I killed with Floret three days earlier decompose on the windowsill, only bits of silvery wings remained, filtery, nearly see-through. I lit a spliff and went outside. It was hot. I sat in the water trough looking up at the sky. I'd seen what I think is an angel argue with her brother about things I couldn't hear, and I danced with the hobgoblins of fairyland.

Slowly the stage is filled with succubae holding black funereal umbrellas. **Ace** *looks at them, afraid this time as* **Bri** *emerges from under an umbrella pointing an imaginary gun at him.*

Bri Boom . . . Boom . . . fairy fairy . . . dead dead. (*He laughs as the stage clears.*)

Ace Six months later our house fell into the sea, simple as that.

Ace *exits as we hear the sound of an approaching storm.* **Mary Annie** *enters alone.*

Mary Annie Manny? Ace? Manny? Nothing. Blackness.

On my own. Wiff on her own. Full moon and a storm. A bad storm. The fairies will be out. But we won't be able to see them. Hidden they'll be, in their garden by the lake. They've shut the door. The door in the rock; they used to open it, on a day in May, anybody could go, everyone was welcome, beautiful it was. Just one day. You could eat, drink, but you couldn't take anything away with you. One day somebody stole a flower. Greedy they were. Wanted to take it home. The fairies were angry. They never opened the door in the rock again. I can still see the lake but I can't see the door. (*Pause.*) Funny that. (*Pause.*) Funny and sad. You've made me sad. I'm crying. You made me cry. Real tears not tiny tears. I was a summer baby with a summer memory. Look, here I am crying in my cot.

She hears the sound of a baby crying.

Can you hear me crying? Can you? Still I pick myself up and give myself a cwtch? Little cwtch for Mary Annie who you call Wiff in your bed? Come for a cwtch, Mary Annie fach, come for a cwtch.

She gets out of bed and picks up a wailing doll.

Plastic.

She rips the arms off the baby and it falls to the floor.

Bloody plastic!

The light by now has faded down just on her. She looks around, suddenly afraid.

Gurruga, gurruga, gurruga . . . no bell, no lights, can't see . . .

Pause. As she continues to speak, the sound of wind, rain, thunder and approaching sea builds up.

Blackness . . . hello? Hello? Manny? (*Pause.*) Rain and wind and sea. (*Pause.*) Manny? Nothing. Less than nothing. Blackness. Manny, my husband for thirty years who's counting but me, no anniversary cards or flowers or choccies? Hello? Language. Why not? Hiccups and

language and all that good evening. Chocky chocky chocky. Fuck CHOCKY. KitKat. Flake. Who knows the secret of the Black Magic box. Me, I'm magic. Where is my son and husband? My hubby. My lover with shit under his nails. Cowshit. Horseshit. Chickenshit. Your nails know it all. Colour. Correct. Constitution. Not right. I can spot a knackered horse by the quality of shit under your nails. That cow's for the slaughterhouse, that chicken's laid its last egg, that turkey is OFF-COLOUR. (*Pause.*) Manny? (*Pause.*) Man? I was dreaming. About the war. About Linus. (*Pause.*) He ran the Emporium. The shop. In Abercave. By the island, was a bakehouse. Grapes he grew. Green grapes. My brother. Older than me. Cheeky I was. The lamb can never teach the sheep to graze. That's what he said. To me. Like a catchphrase. He was the sheep. I was the lamb. It was a saying he had. He was in the war. He came back from the war. Don't go out, she said, my mother, it's a tramp. Ten I was. It wasn't a tramp. It was Linus, unshaved, demobbed, free, in a suit. She fainted mam did on the slabs. When she saw him. He bought me a bike, but there were no lights, or street lights. Gurruga, gurruga, gurruga I shouted, no bell, no lights, can't see. And I'd ride into the night. (*Pause.*) I've never been afraid of the night me. I've sat in the bushes listening to fairies in the dark, dancing. Fairies and angels. I've given them my teeth. I've seen doors in rocks that lead to the otherworld. In the dark. On my bike. The one Linus brought with him back from the war. (*Pause.*) Gurruga . . . gurruga . . . gurruga . . . no bell, no lights . . . (*Pause.*) Can't see. But I'm frightened tonight . . . (*Pause.*) The wind, and the rain and the sea. (*Pause.*) Manny . . . ? MANNY?

Lights go up on **Manny** *as the cacophony increases. He is soaking wet.*

Manny I'm still here, Wiff.

Mary Annie Where have you been? I'm frightened.

Manny I've been out.

Mary Annie In this weather? You must be soaking.

Manny It's coming, Wiff.

Mary Annie What is?

Manny The sea.

Mary Annie At this time of night.

Manny I knew it would come at night.

Mary Annie But we haven't packed.

Manny There's no time to pack, where's Ace?

Mary Annie In bed.

Manny Get him woken up and take what you can outside into the trailer.

Mary Annie But . . .

Manny JUST DO IT, MARY ANNIE.

Mary Annie Mary Annie, Mary Annie, Mary Annie.

Manny Have you turned off the electric?

Mary Annie Yes.

Manny Rounded up the chickens?

Mary Annie Yes.

Manny Got Ronty?

Mary Annie Ronty's in the shed already barking, can't you hear him?

Manny I hear him now, go and get him, then take Ace, yourself and whatever you can carry to the trailer.

Mary Annie I'm going, I'm going.

She exits. **Ace** *enters.*

Ace It's come then.

Manny It's come.

Ace You always said it would come at night.

Manny We were born in a shrinking land next to a tantrum sea, so go and get your mother and put her in the trailer.

Ace What about you?

Manny I'll make sure everything's all right here then I'll be with you.

Ace 10–4.

Manny And hurry.

Ace I'm hurrying, I'm hurrying.

Ace *exits.*

Ace (*off*) Mam . . . MAM . . .

Mary Annie (*off*) I'm coming, I'm coming.

Clap of thunder as the storm increases.

Manny I knew you'd come at night. Black sea. Wild horses, wind, rain. What made you angry? Not me. Not us. I always respected you. Me and you were like that once. Then you had tantrums, Wiff was right when she said the sea's gone mad, but why take it out on us? We never walked on you, we always respected you, we've watched you raging against the rocks, we've seen you shipwreck boats, but we put it down to a tantrum. Bear with a sore head. We knew you were moody, but we respected your moods, we accommodated them, we put up with them, we lived side by side with them. You let us sail on your back in the summer, we paddled in the shallows, we watched you rage against the cold of winter. But we never complained. We just said it's the sea. The sea being the sea. We never thought you'd take our house. My father's house, and his father before that. Why? Wasn't us who put oil in you, or gassed you or fished you nearly fishless. We've pissed in you but we never shit in you. I've smoked on your back but I never threw my filters in there. From my fags. Tipped ash, yes, but not butts. Not filters and definitely no cigars. We never threw rubbish in as a family.

Fertilized the land, that's all I did. They told me to do it. There's some chemicals to make the grass grow greener, never said it was full of shit. What do I know about water tables? Uh? Or gas? Or oil? Or big fishing dredging ships? Or shoals? I don't know. I didn't know. You've got no right to pick on me. On us. We're innocent. (*Pause.*) We were like that once. Me and you. But not no more we're not. You're on the warpath. You want to take over the world. Make a new development. You'll only be happy when fish are drinking in here and seals clapping in here. When fucking dogfish and crabs are the dancing girls in here. (*Pause.*) But I'll still be here too. In the locker next to Davy. Growing gills, growing fins, drinking and talking through bubbles. Remembering. (*Pause.*) The remembering fish. That's what they'll call me.

Ace (*off*) Dad . . . DAD . . . HURRY . . . HURRY.

Pause.

Manny I'm coming . . . I'm coming (*Pause.*) So rip down our house, sea . . . do your worst. (*Pause.*) Because you'll never beat me. (*Pause.*) We'll still be here. (*Pause.*) I'll still be here. (*Pause.*) I WILL STILL BE HERE!!!

Manny *stands defiant in the rising maelstrom. As it increases in ferocity we hear* **Mary Annie** *and* **Ace** *shouting for him. Perhaps the storm noises could also include text and action from the rest of the cast. Lights fade to nothing on* **Manny** *as the storm and sea build to a climax. We reach blackout before the storm noise subsides.*

Part Two

Lights up on **Bri** *standing alone.*

Bri Do you know the memory span of a goldfish only lasts one length of an ordinary domestic tank? He swims along happily, gets to the end of the tank, turns round and thinks look at all that space. Then he swims to the other end, turns round and thinks the same again. And again. And again. No past, no future, just the water, the pressure the movement of the gills, the mouth, feeding, swimming, existing, suspended in a void. No memory, nothing. Don't you think that sounds good.

Lights up on **Manny**, **Ace** *and* **Bron** *standing in exactly the same positions as they were at the beginning.*

Manny And?

Ace She said the car belonged to her brother.

Manny Who's her brother?

Bron Brian. Brian James. Do you know him?

Ace No.

Bron He disappeared into thin air two years ago. My mother thinks.

Lights up on **Mati** *and* **Gruff**

Mati He's dead, Gruff.

Gruff Course he's not dead. What's he want to die for?

Mati Because you never loved him.

Gruff Don't talk crap.

Bron She's always loved him. After all, he's her son.

Mati Just like Marshall is.

Gruff I don't want to talk about Marshall.

Mati But you loved him, Gruff. You loved him more than anything else in your heart. Until he shamed you. (*Pause.*) In front of all the town. That's why you drink in the Ship and Pilot.

Gruff I don't drink in the Ship and Pilot no more.

Mati Exactly, because you don't like the junkies coming up to you and saying hey, Gruff, tell us why the angel with the Jaffa Cakes axed new-born lambs to death on the mountains.

Gruff He's never an angel.

Mati I know but that's what you called him, you called him an angel in front of Bri, you let him lie on the sitting-room floor with milk and Jaffa Cakes, you taught him to fish, you taught him how to tie flies, purple demons, cochabondees, but you never took Bri. Bri was a fat lazy bastard who couldn't do anything to please you.

Gruff That's not true, Mati.

Mati It is true, Gruff, he only did up that car for you and him to go for a ride in. An 1800 TC blue Marina. He only put tinted glass in it so you could go for a drive. Just you and him in the car. Talking chokes, talking fanbelts, talking father-and-son talk in private, behind tinted glass, away from the eyes of the town.

Gruff No.

Mati Yes, Gruff, yes, he wanted to win you back and when he'd won you back he could win his brother back, turn back the clock to how it used to be before he fell in that river. A family again. Turned back the time. Started again. But you never let him, he was always second best, it would have been all right if he wanted me, but he knew he already had me. He wanted you and you turned away from him, and you didn't care. You didn't fucking care.

Gruff Shut up, Mati . . . SHUT UP.

Mati He's dead, Gruff. You killed something in him. And

he's never coming back. (*Pause.*) And now you've lost your angel too. (*Pause.*) Because he's shamed you. (*Pause.*) Instead of an angel, you just got a lost boy waiting for his brother to come back. That's why he goes to the airport. But he won't be back. That son's lost for good.

Mati *walks away as the lights change and come up on* **Marshall**, *sitting with his fishing rod staring at the sea.* **Gruff** *approaches.*

Gruff Caught anything?

Marshall No.

Gruff I pished on my hand.

Marshall Oh.

Gruff It's them button-up flies, don't know why your mam buys them for me. Too trendy for me. I'm a zip-man. I like a zip. Always have, always will be. (*Pause.*) We haven't been fishing together for a long time.

Marshall No.

Gruff We'll have to do it again.

Marshall Maybe.

Pause.

Gruff Where you been? (*Pause.*) Marshall?

Marshall Bonin said he saw him at a football match. On the TV. He said he was a face in the crowd.

Gruff Where?

Marshall Chelsea versus Arsenal in the cup.

Gruff Is that where you been . . . London?

Marshall No.

Gruff Oh.

Marshall There's no point.

Gruff Why not?

Marshall Because he supported Manchester United, Dad. He fucking hated Arsenal.

Gruff Don't we all. (*Pause.*) So where you been?

Marshall To the airport.

Gruff Heathrow?

Marshall Rhoose. He liked to watch the planes take off and land.

Gruff And take down the numbers?

Marshall No . . . just watch them take off and land.

Gruff He's a funny bugger your brother.

Marshall He used to spend hours there, time would stand still for him there.

Gruff He's always been terrible with time. (*Pause.*) What I mean is . . . if time ran by his clock, trains and planes and buses would crash . . . everywhere.

Marshall Uh?

Gruff Him and time. He's a law to his own.

Marshall Yeh.

Gruff Trains and planes would crash. Because of the time zones. Everybody'd be too scared to take off.

Marshall I don't follow, Dad.

Gruff Well, planes would take off on one side of the world at the same time as another eighty would take off somewhere else in the world.

Marshall So?

Gruff So if they were running on Bri's time, and his time's all over the place, all the time zones would be all over the place too. They'd all meet in the middle and crash, none of them knowing what time it was when it happened.

Marshall Because they were on Bri's time?

Gruff Exactly, so Pakistan would be phoning up Australia at the same time that the Poles were phoning up the Argentine asking . . .

Marshall What happened to our planes?

Gruff All at the same time, but nobody would know what time it was because all the clocks would be on Bri's time so the only way they could sort it out would be . . .

Marshall TO PHONE BRI.

Gruff Exactly.

Marshall But he'd be out.

Gruff Yeh.

Marshall On the razz.

Gruff On the town.

Marshall On the nest.

Gruff And all the while the world would be phoning him to ask him the time.

Marshall In his room. Man. United clock by his bed ticking away on its own.

Gruff On Bri time.

Marshall Bri time.

Gruff Not any fucking time but . . .

Marshall Bri time.

Gruff Phones ringing every second, the world calling.

Marshall All the dead people.

Gruff All the living people wanting news.

Marshall But my brother is out.

Gruff Out.

Marshall OUT.

Gruff The bastard.

Marshall He should be ashamed of himself. He should be BASTARD ASHAMED.

Gruff Yes.

Marshall The least he could do was buy himself a FUCKING ANSAMACHINE.

Gruff Exactly. WHAT A STUPID TWAT MY SON IS. ALL THIS PAIN BECAUSE OF HIM.

Marshall Pain. Doesn't he know that people still fucking care for him.

Gruff That his father . . .

Marshall And his brother still . . .

Both FUCKING LOVE HIM!

Gruff So why did he fuck off? Why doesn't he keep in touch?

Marshall All he's got to do is to PICK UP THE FUCKING PHONE.

Gruff OR WRITE A LETTER?

Marshall To show that he's alive, but has he?

Gruff No. Because he's a FAT LAZY BASTARD AND I LOVE HIM.

Marshall And me. He pulled me out of the river. HE KISSED AIR INTO MY LUNGS.

Gruff So after two years of nothing, why the FUCK DOESN'T HE RING OR PHONE OR TELL US HE'S ALIVE?

Marshall THE BASTARD.

Gruff THE TWAT.

Marshall I FUCKING HATE HIM.

Gruff I FUCKING HATE HIM

Light goes up on **Bron** *and* **Mati**.

Bron I FUCKING HATE HIM.

Mati I FUCKING HATE HIM.

Gruff THE WHOLE OF THE ARGENTINE AND POLAND AND PAKISTAN BASTARD HATE HIM.

Pause.

Marshall So come back, Bri . . . come back.

Gruff Come back.

Mati I love you.

Bron I love you.

Gruff I love you.

Mati *and* **Gruff** *exit.*

Bron But he hasn't come back.

Marshall And I want him back, Bron. To explain. (*Pause.*) It wasn't me who killed those lambs, Bron, it was Bri, I made the Paula Brown story up.

Bron Why?

Marshall Because he said. He told me to. He said . . .

Lights up on **Bri**.

Bri You owe me one. You fucking owe me one, man.

Marshall But why the fuck did you do it, Bri?

Bri Why do you think?

Marshall I wouldn't have asked if I'd known, Bri.

Bri Can't you work it out for yourself?

Marshall They were just lambs, Bri, what the fuck have you got against lambs, Bri?

Bri Because they just happened to be there, and will you

quit putting Bri at the end of all your sentences?

Marshall Uh . . . ?

Bri Do you do it to remind yourself of who I am? Do you?

Marshall No.

Bri I PULLED YOU OUT OF THAT RIVER YOU FUCK. (*Pause.*) You don't need to put Bri at the end of your sentences. I'm Bri, normal Bri. Normal Norman, the normallest one in all of the town. (*Pause.*) I'm your brother. You aren't an angel, Marsh. You're just my brother. Who I pulled out of the water. (*Pause.*) You were dead. I didn't pull you out so you could grow up and ignore me, man, to put Bri at the end of your sentences. If I'd known you were going to do that I'd have left you on the bank for dead. (*Pause.*) You owe me, Marsh. You fucking owe me.

Bri *exits.*

Marshall So I took the rap. Made up a story. I took the axe one night, went up the mountains 'til I came to a farm. I saw a woman feed chickens.

Mary Annie *enters throwing feathers in the air as if it was feed.*

Marshall I waited for her to go inside until it was dark and then . . .

Pause.

Bron What, Marsh?

Marshall I fucking murdered them, with Bri's axe. I did it for him.

Ace *screams and brings an axe down hard on a piece of wood.*
Mary Annie *enters holding a dead chicken.*

Ace Bastards.

Mary Annie Use these.

Ace Uh?

Mary Annie Gloves. Plastic gloves.

Ace I'll be all right.

Mary Annie Chickens have germs, Ace. Especially dead ones. Here, take the gloves.

Ace I'll be finished in a minute.

Mary Annie Please . . .

Ace *takes the gloves, puts them on..*

Mary Annie Poor chickens.

Ace Yeh.

Mary Annie Never knew what hit them.

Ace No.

Mary Annie One minute they're sitting on their eggs, the next minute . . . (*Pause.*) I'd only just fed them too. It's too cruel, Ace . . . too cruel. Why did somebody have to do such a thing. (*Pause.*) What you going to do with them?

Ace Burn them. And the shed and everything in it. Couple of hours from now, you'll never be able to tell there was ever chickens here.

Mary Annie I liked the chickens. They were my responsibility. Yours and mine. You grew up feeding the chickens.

Ace Bit of burnt earth, that's all will be left. Then it will be the end of the chicken story. No one will ever know we ever kept chickens. If anybody asks me ever again about chickens, I'll say I don't know, we never had any. The chicken story will be over.

Mary Annie So what will our story be?

Ace We'll make up a story, Mam. Don't worry about that, we'll always have a story.

Ace *lights a Zippo and he and* **Mary Annie** *watch the chicken shed go up in flames.* **Mary Annie** *exits,* **Manny** *enters.*

Bron I'm sorry, Ace.

Ace It's not your fault.

Bron He did it for Bri.

Ace Yeh.

Bron I'm sorry.

Ace Forget it.

Manny The bastard, the murdering little bastard and there's me thinking . . .

Ace It's over, Dad, in the past.

Manny You've changed your tune.

Ace It's called love, Dad.

Manny Love?

Ace Love. I think I'm in love.

Manny Love, Ace . . . is a mystery.

Ace Love, Dad . . . is an angel in a blue Marina with leather upholstery.

Crash in Suede's 'White Trash' as the set clears and we join **Ace** *and* **Bron** *in the car. Music plays on the radio. Sound and lights create the sense of movement.*

Ace Who's this?

Bron Suede. 'White Trash'.

Ace I like it.

Bron Me too. You going to keep all that to yourself or can I have some?

Ace Here . . . (*He passes her the joint. She smokes.*) What's Bron short for?

Bron Bronwen.

Ace What's it mean?

Bron Pure one. Bron means breast, wen means white, you have to work the rest out.

Pause.

Ace Bron also means nearly. (*Pause.*) As in bron gorffen.

Bron Nearly finished.

Ace Yeh. You speak Welsh?

Bron Yeh. You?

Ace Only when I was small. (*Pause.*) I like Welsh.

Bron Why?

Ace Because it's got gaps.

Bron What kind of gaps?

Ace Like it's not all hard and fast; like there are rules but there are still gaps . . . like to fill in, the meaning . . . you got to work the meaning out for yourself . . . like in English you say 'The cat sat on the mat' . . .

Bron Yeh . . .

Ace Well, in Welsh you could say the cat sat in front of the fire . . . you wouldn't have to mention the mat at all. (*Pause.*) What I mean is the cat could be anywhere yet at the same time you know it's on the mat in front of the fire. You got me?

Bron Think so.

Ace Like it's got gaps. You make the pictures up in the gaps.

Bron Like jazz.

Ace Yeh.

Bron The difference between jazz and classical music is the gaps.

Ace If you want, yeh.

Bron Like an orchestra follows all the notes, give or take

how the conductor looks at it.

Ace Yeh.

Bron Whereas in jazz there's a tune but you can get to it however you want, like make up your own notes.

Ace Bingo.

Bron I like gaps.

Ace And me.

Bron I like things I don't understand. Only things I don't understand interest me. Why celebrate what you already know, Ace?

Ace Exactly, Bron.

Bron I mean . . . (*She stops the car.*) Toys for Christmas I've already played with should be returned to the shops.

Ace In return for a game you've never seen before but you will never understand.

Bron Exactly.

Ace That's called the fucking thrill of discovery, Bron.

Bron What I don't know I like.

Ace On the button. (*Pause.*) And imagination.

Bron Imagination. Yeh.

Ace A fucking fantasy world.

Bron Yeh. To be Welsh at the end of the twentieth century you got to have imagination, Ace.

Ace Too fucking right.

Bron I mean. The only way to shop in Spar or Tesco's or Safeway's or some shit is not to see Spar or Tesco's at all but imagine something else.

Ace Exactly.

Bron I mean, let's face it who ever said SHOPPING

WAS BEAUTIFUL?

Ace Not me.

Bron Nor me.

Lights change to an interior supermarket. **Ace** *and* **Bron** *stand amongst the shoppers.*

Bron I used to work here.

Ace Fuck.

Bron Till two weeks ago.

Ace Shit.

Bron I chucked in my job and you know why?

Ace Why?

Bron No mystery.

The supervisor **Keith** *enters and watches* **Bron** *eat her lunch.*

Keith You can tell what kind of a person someone is by the chocolate they eat.

Bron Is that a fact.

Keith People who eat Mars bars or Snickers are filling a void in their lives, but those people who eat Turkish Delight like the exotic. (*Takes a Turkish Delight from* **Bron** *and licks it delicately.*) I see that you like the exotic, check-out one.

Bron Maybe . . . Why?

Keith Because I've been thinking.

Bron Really?

Keith Really. Thinking what an exotic fuck with you would be like.

Bron Do you think that about every woman you meet, Keith?

Keith Most women.

Bron But not all.

Keith No.

Bron What kind of women do you not think about fucking, Keith?

Keith Old women. Ugly women. My mother. But I'd like to fuck you. With my hand covered in oil. I'd like to put my hand on that white cotton blouse of yours. Mark it. Just on the tit. Unbutton slowly, put my filthy hand on your lacy white bra. Put my thumb in your mouth. Smudge the lipstick, then kiss it off. Then fuck you. Till your body's covered in marks. My marks, my hands. Then lick you. All of you. Clean. Back to where we started. (*Pause.*) Then I could talk to you.

Bron Because you'd fucked me.

Keith Yeh . . . Talk and talk and fuck and fuck until it was time to fuck again. Then I'd fuck you again. And again and again.

Bron Until you couldn't fuck or talk any more?

Keith Yeh.

Pause.

Bron That sounds OK, Keith.

Keith Yeh?

Bron Yeh. Except. We'd have nothing to say. We'd be sitting in the same room saying nothing. We'd eat and say nothing. So we'd have to go out, to a bar, to get drunk, stare at the optics. We'd drink till we couldn't drink no more. We'd have fucked and fucked and talked and talked and drunk and drunk till we couldn't talk, drink or fuck any more.

Keith Uh?

Bron Then we'd go home, Keith, and there you'd be. Fat and old. Unfuckable. With the TV on. A game show. Holding a Lottery ticket in your hand and your fingers crossed. You with your hopes pinned on a sixty-four-million-to-one chance. And you'd have fuck all to say,

Keith. You'd have frozen in time since the last time we talked. After we fucked. You'd fucked and talked yourself into frozen time. While time all around you was moving on. Then I'd look in the mirror and I'd be as old and ugly as you. Where did it fucking go? All them fucking years. I'd listen to my body decay. I wouldn't be able to move my arms or legs or head. I would only be able to feel my head. It would be heavy, full of the things I dreamt about and never did. I'd feel ashamed. My face would feel as if I'd been skinned. And then I'd scream. I'd scream and scream until I couldn't scream any more. I'd have missed the plot see, Keith, the crack, the dream, the mystery.

Keith You're fucking weird, check-out one.

Bron I know and I love it. You want to fuck? Fuck your job and fuck you, Keith. I got a life to live.

She boots him in the groin and as he doubles up she turns to **Ace**.

Bron I reckon there's a mystery, Ace, do you?

Ace 10–4, Bron, 10–4.

Bron We just got to use our imagination and stay away from supervisors.

Ace Yeh.

Bron Because they fuck up your head, make you forget who you are.

Ace And so we loaded up the car with booze and fags. We bought a tape and all the while I kept thinking, who are we anyway? Who can we ever be except . . .

Lights go up on **Manny** *and* **Mary Annie** *standing with two suitcases.*

Manny The sons and daughters of our mothers and fathers.

Ace Exactly.

Mary Annie We haven't travelled far, see.

Manny No.

Mary Annie We were born in this house.

Manny I was, and you just down the valley.

Ace Gaerlishe!

Manny Gaerlishe.

Mary Annie Gaerlishe.

Manny This is our land, it grows grass, it grazes sheep.

Mary Annie Do we own grass that graze sheep?

Manny We used to.

Mary Annie But not any more?

Manny No.

Mary Annie The sheep went away.

Manny Yes.

Mary Annie Our fences go unmended.

Manny Yes.

Mary Annie Fence-posts sit in our garden rotting.

Manny We never had a garden.

Mary Annie Not ever?

Manny No.

Mary Annie No border of daffodils, or pansies, or tulip, or rose?

Manny No.

Mary Annie No garden of root vegetables or leeks?

Manny No.

Mary Annie Cabbages?

Manny No.

Mary Annie Peas, sprouts, kidney beans?

Manny None.

Mary Annie Did we keep goats?

Manny No goats . . . as such.

Mary Annie Such?

Manny Chickens we kept.

Mary Annie Hooray.

Manny You tended them more than me.

Mary Annie They were my responsibility.

Manny You and the boy's.

Mary Annie Our boy, our boy . . . our baby.

Manny Of course our baby. Would we ever dream of asking someone else's baby to tend our chickens?

Mary Annie Not ideally, no.

Manny Exactly. This house has been babied. Gurgles and giggles have been heard here, nappies soiled, back patted and mouth fed. Clothes have been knitted, our baby has been gloved, hatted, even balaclavad, little shoes have gathered dust in our shed.

Mary Annie Little shoes?

Manny Grown out of as he turns into a child. Old shoes discarded in favour of wellingtons and boots.

Mary Annie We should have given them away.

Manny Some we did. Others no doubt you forgot about.

Mary Annie Forgot.

Manny Some things we remember about, others we forget.

Mary Annie Forget.

Manny Not all things can be remembered will, only seated memories are kept in the strongboxes of our minds.

Mary Annie No standing room.

Manny No.

Mary Annie Why's that?

Manny Because if the standers collide with the sitters and confuse things, memories collide, by the time the bus has reached its destination there is not a clear seated memory to remember.

Mary Annie How come?

Manny Because the standers become the sitters and the sitters the standers. The new standers look at the sitters and claim strange memories as their own.

Mary Annie When they're not.

Manny No.

Mary Annie Funny.

Manny It is.

Mary Annie Makes you wonder.

Manny It does.

Mary Annie How we can still claim some memories as our own?

Manny It does.

Mary Annie Struggle to keep an orderly bus as we journey to nowhere.

Manny Nowhere.

Mary Annie Place we don't know.

Manny Exactly.

Mary Annie You and me.

Manny Mary Annie and Manny.

Mary Annie Their house fell into the sea.

Manny That's why our Ace will have to fly the nest.

Mary Annie To stay away from the cliffs. STAY AWAY FROM THE CLIFFS WE'LL SHOUT TO HIM.

Manny And off he'll go.

Mary Annie Off.

Manny To other places.

Mary Annie Cities.

Manny Towns.

Mary Annie Countries.

Manny He'll have to go.

Mary Annie Mm.

Manny Not stay here.

Mary Annie Not after what's happened.

Manny No.

Mary Annie I knew the sea had tantrums, but . . .

Manny What we saw was no tantrum.

Mary Annie No.

Manny The sea was on the warpath.

Mary Annie It was.

Manny Painted its body blue and marched wild and naked over the land.

Mary Annie Wanting revenge.

Manny Revenge.

Mary Annie For being shit on.

Manny Shit on.

Mary Annie From a great height.

Manny Height.

Mary Annie Like us.

Manny Us.

Mary Annie Us. Ace. Mary Annie. Manny.

Manny Running for the sun on the flipside of black.

Mary Annie I can see the moon.

Manny Moon.

Mary Annie Moon.

Manny A half moon.

Mary Annie A lit moon.

Manny A half-lit moon.

Mary Annie We can sit on the moon see.

Manny Ride on its back.

Mary Annie Control the sea.

Manny The sea, the sea, the tantrum sea.

Mary Annie We'll make an ally of the sea.

Manny Why not?

Mary Annie Make up and be friends.

Manny Have tantrums with it!

Mary Annie We'll tantrum together!

Manny Us and the sea.

Mary Annie Shitting on the ships of oil and rubbish.

Manny Ships.

Mary Annie Shits!

Manny The governments.

Mary Annie The corporations.

Manny The ugly monied.

Mary Annie Bugger them.

Manny Exactly.

Mary Annie Wipe them out like Noah.

Manny The shitted on against the shitters.

Mary Annie Then the sea will recede.

Manny Peaceful.

Mary Annie We'll mop up the carpets.

Manny Rebuild the house.

Mary Annie And start again.

Manny Cleaned.

Mary Annie De-lotteried.

Manny De-governed.

Mary Annie Ungoverned.

Manny Free.

Mary Annie We'll call back our sheep.

Manny And our chickens.

Mary Annie And our Ace.

Manny Grown Ace.

Mary Annie He'll cross bridges to find us.

Manny He will.

Mary Annie We'll have to cook a bird.

Manny We will.

Mary Annie In a pot, a big bird.

Manny Sit around a table.

Mary Annie And talk.

Manny We'll have to remember to talk.

Mary Annie We will.

Manny Remember what we talked about now.

Mary Annie Now.

Manny Start again.

Mary Annie Mm.

Manny Get a sheep dog.

Mary Annie Name him Ronty.

Manny Remake Ronty.

Mary Annie Buy what we need and . . .

Manny Need what we buy.

Mary Annie Exactly.

Manny No more. Build 'em high, sell 'em cheap.

Mary Annie None.

Manny No more gadgets with no instructions.

Mary Annie No vacuum cleaners.

Manny No.

Mary Annie Or hair dryers.

Manny No.

Mary Annie Nothing but a bed.

Manny A good bed.

Mary Annie So that we can lie back and look at the moon.

Manny The half moon.

Mary Annie The half-lit moon. The moon that don't snore, don't burp and takes your drawers down gently. A moon with long fingers, warm fingers and clean nails.

Manny Huh!

Mary Annie To take my drawers down gently! A moon you can hide under the bedclothes and watch it rise in the

night. It hasn't risen yet, Manny . . . I'm watching.

Manny I'm too old, Wiff.

Mary Annie Night-time is the right time.

Manny I'm sixty-six.

Mary Annie Only one short of the devil.

Manny My arteries have hardened.

Mary Annie Drink more whiskey.

Manny My bones are brittle.

Mary Annie Thins the blood.

Manny My skin is sagging.

Mary Annie Fire in your belly.

Manny I'm shrinking.

Mary Annie I know.

Manny I swear I've lost two inches.

Mary Annie What!

Manny Every year I roll up my trousers, haven't you noticed?

Mary Annie Size isn't everything, Manny.

Manny No, Wiff.

Mary Annie No.

Manny Turn off the lights then and let me put your moon on my chest.

Mary Annie Why not.

They kiss then snuggle under the bedclothes. They make love as the whole supermarket starts to dance with shoppers and trolleys, much to **Keith***'s despair.* **Ace** *and* **Bron** *get into the car as the dance ends.*

Ace Where to?

Bron THE AIRPORT! WHERE ELSE!

Ace And I smiled and watched her drive. I didn't care where. We had the booze, we had the fags, we had the draw and I'd found a babe. We were stoned and beautiful taking time out in the country, innocent and free. And as we drove further and further and higher and higher into the night I swear I saw most of Wales spread out in front of me. Like a carpet on an uneven floor. Not even a floor just an idea of a floor. And the carpet? It wasn't fucking Axminster that's for sure, but who needed Axminster when I had all this. I could see for miles. Into England, Devon, Cornwall and beyond Cornwall, France, then Spain and right at the bottom at the far end of the horizon, I swear I can see the lights of North Africa. All of Europe spead out in front of me, of us. I turned to Bron, only a silhouette behind the wheel, only the embers of the joint showing me she was still there.

Bron I'm still here, Ace.

Ace I never thought I'd ever see this far, Bron. Maybe I'm imagining it, my head playing tricks.

Bron If you can see it, Ace, it's there. Who gives a fuck.

Ace And she was right. As I sat in the car that night looking out from the back of beyond to the shores of North Africa, I felt in my bones that the times are a-changing. Maybe I can soon call myself a European. A Welsh European, with my own language and the rudiments of another on the tip of my tongue, German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Czech, even English. Will speaking a new language break the chains of a fucked-up head? Will I be able to be who I want to be then put who I want to be back in the fucked-up bit so it's not fucked up no more? I hope so, man. But I ain't the only fucked-up bastard out there. Everybody's got fucked-up bits. A design flaw that only some can ever straighten out, phobias, fantasies, desires, things they don't even know they got locked up in the strongboxes of their brains. It ain't just me, man. I know it ain't just me. There's millions of you out there. So many secrets and so little time. It ain't only me, man, it

ain't only me. (*Pause.*) And then she said . . . right out of the blue . . .

The sound of the car suddenly stops, the sense of movement stops.

Bron Do you think my brother's dead?

Lights up on **Bri**.

Bri For a year and a half I lived in the city where I knew no one and no one knew me. Then I hitched back to that seaside town I used to call home. I checked into a motel in the services on the outskirts of town, the Gas Station Motel, I look in the mirror but it isn't me I see staring back at me. It's him.

Gruff *enters.*

Gruff Don't lie, Bri. Lying will get you nowhere in this world.

Bri Every lamb's neck I snapped was yours. I did it for you, Dad, I did it for you.

He drinks from a bottle and exits as does **Gruff**. **Manny** *enters.*

Ace And I said I don't know, who is your brother. And then she told me her story. But her story reminded me of our story, Dad.

Manny We don't talk about that story any more, Ace. That story is locked up in the strongbox of our minds.

Ace I know that but . . .

Manny That story is our secret, Ace. It's family. It's a family secret.

Ace But . . .

Manny WILL YOU SHUT UP ABOUT OUR FUCKING STORY!

Suddenly there is the sound of a flush. **Mary Annie** *comes out of the toilet and looks at* **Ace** *uncertainly.*

Mary Annie The toilet's spotless. I make sure of that.

Always has been. Single and dual flush. No graffiti. (*Pause.*) No vandals. (*Pause.*) Done out in blue. (*Pause.*) Fresh coat not long ago. Sea-blue washbasin with aquamarine finish and brass pipe fittings. (*Pause.*) Bit dusty but what do you expect? I'm old. (*Pause.*) Do you know we once won a holiday to Jamaica? Off the corn flakes? (*Pause.*) But we never went. (*Pause.*) Are you looking for our son? Is he, Manny?

Manny No, Wiff.

Mary Annie That's good. Because he's gone out. Do you know I caught him reading William Shakespeare once? The Collected Works? Need a magnifying glass to see the writing. He keeps a diary my son. His name's Hywel. Hywel Ace. But he's gone out, I'm sorry. (*Pause.*) Do you know him? (*Pause.*) Mmm?

Ace I am him, Mam.

She looks hard at him. Pause.

Mary Annie Don't be so soft. Do you think I don't know my own son? Be off with you. You hear me? Be off.

Ace *doesn't move.* **Mary Annie** *looks vulnerable. She walks towards her bed. Picks up the plastic dolly and pops off its head. She throws it at him. He doesn't move. She then points an imaginary shotgun at him.*

Mary Annie Boom . . . boom. (*Pause.*) Dead. Dead. (*Pause.*) Fairy. Fairy.

She looks at him then exits.

Manny And?

Ace Then we went to the airport.

The sound of aircraft coming in to land fills the whole arena. **Bron** *and* **Ace** *sit at the perimeter fence watching the landing plane. The noise subsides. They drink and smoke spliffs.*

Bron That's a seven four seven.

Ace Yeh?

Bron Cruising speed 515 miles per hour at an altitude of 33–37,000 feet. (*Pause.*) My brother Bri was into planes. I came with him two days before he went missing. (*Pause.*) It's his car.

Ace It's a nice car.

Bron He lost his licence.

Ace That's a drag.

Bron My mother thinks he's dead.

Ace What do you think?

Bron I don't know. Sometimes I think he's alive, other times . . .

Ace What?

Bron I don't know . . . something . . . in his eyes . . .

Ace What, Bron, what?

Lights up on **Bri** *looking dishevelled and wasted. Music plays on the car radio.*

Bri Spell catastrophe.

Bron Mm?

Bri Y or an E?

Bron E I think.

Bri You sure?

Bron Yeh . . . I reckon it's E.

Bri E . . . C . . . A . . . T . . . A . . . S . . . T . . . R . . . O . . . P . . . H . . . E. (*Pause.*) Means fucking endgame, like when a plane crashes right, they say the PanAm catastrophe.

Bron I know what it means, Bri.

Bri Like disaster, only catastrophe's like more disastrous.

Bron Like catastrophic, you mean.

Bri Bingo. (*Pause.*) Quantas is the airline, see.

Bron Uh?

Bri No crashes in its history, fucking catastropheeless.

Bron Who are they?

Bri Australian, never had a crash.

Bron Gunn might have flown with them. Is he still out there? Australia?

Bri As far as I know. (*Pause.*) Who's this?

Bron Marc Bolan.

Bri Who's he?

Bron T. Rex . . . 'Metal Guru' . . . seventies band, don't you know anything, Bri?

Bri Oh.

Bron Smashed into a tree in Putney he did . . . in his Mini. They have vigils there on his anniversary.

Bri Like light candles and sing songs?

Bron Something like that.

Bri Wonder if people will do that for me?

Bron You got to have done something to do that.

Bri Like what?

Bron Like something. Be in a band or something.

Bri I suppose. (*Pause.*) Or disappear.

Bron What you want to disappear for?

Bri I didn't. (*Pause.*) I just said it was an option.

Bron Some option.

Pause.

Bri Come on, let's go home.

Bron Haven't finished our cans.

Bri We'll drink them on the way.

Bron They'll catch you one day, Bri, and then you'll be fucked. No more driving.

Bri So then fucked I'll be. Come on. I'll race you to the car.

Bri *exits. Lights come back up on* **Ace** *and* **Bron**.

Bron Two days after that they arrested him and BOOM. (*Pause.*) We haven't seen him since.

Ace Maybe he's gone underground.

Bron Uh?

Ace Found a door in a rock one day and now he's dancing with the fucking hobgoblins of fairyland.

Bron If only.

Ace It's the underworld see, Bron, the fucking otherworld dancing . . . that's where he'll be. Every now and then, they come up from other underworld and into this world.

Bron Come off it.

Ace I've seen them, Bron. I danced with them. But they don't come up too often any more because we do bad things to them.

Bron What kind of bad things? (**Ace** *looks away.*) Ace?

Ace They say we'll take you to a place so beautiful that your brain explodes, you can drink, eat, fuck do whatever but you can't take anything back with you or you'll never be able to come again; but what happens?

Bron We try to take something back?

Ace On the button, we try and take a souvenir, a memento of where we've been, thinking they won't notice and then bingo, we fall unconscious on the ground, and when we wake up that memento has disappeared and we're standing in a field in the middle of nowhere thinking where the fuck am I? Who the fuck am I and where the fuck am

I going?

Bron And?

Ace And then you spend the whole of the rest of your life trying to go back to that world, Bron, trying to find the key to the door, trying to find the fucking door itself, but you won't, man, because you fucked it all up. You had your chance. One chance you get, Bron . . . and you blow it.

Bron That's heavy, Ace.

Ace It is heavy, that's why you don't see the otherworld no more, Bron. Cos they're pissed off with us, they're not going to give us any more throws because we don't know how to handle a good time when it's staring us right in the face. The underground parties from now on, Bron, are strictly members only.

Bron Apart from Brian James.

Ace Apart from Brian James, yeh.

Bron Cos Brian James can handle a good time.

Ace Yeh.

Bron He's not going to want to bring souvenirs back with him because he's got it all photographed in his head.

Ace Yeh.

Bron So he won't come back because he's having too good a time, you mean?

Ace Yeh.

Bron And time down there don't mean the same.

Ace No, like a year for us is only a minute to them.

Bron Or less.

Ace Yeh.

Bron In that case Bri's only been missing for two minutes so what's the point in worrying?

Ace Exactly. (*Pause.*) I thought you were an angel from the otherworld when I first saw you, Bron.

Bron I'm no angel.

Ace I dreamt that I danced with you underground. I saw you dance then you came up to me and said . . .

Bron Would you like to come to a hotel with me and make love until the dark turns to orange?

Lights change, and come up on **Manny**.

Manny And . . .

Ace I said I'd love to.

Manny And?

Ace We went, Dad. To the Gas Station Motel on the outskirts of the town where she danced for me and I danced for her.

Lights change to a motel room. **Bron** *and* **Ace** *enter, they undress, hungrily tearing at clothes and body, the rest of the cast may join in in this dance of sex – wrapping sheets, twisting bodies and generally creating erotic mayhem – the dance comes to a climax. Lights change and come up on* **Ace** *standing in the dawn light, dressed only in jeans.* **Bron** *joins him at the window.*

Manny And then?

Ace I said . . .

Manny What? (*Pause.*) What, Ace, WHAT?

Ace Can you keep a secret, Bron?

Bron Try me.

Ace Like a real dark secret . . .

Bron Course I can, Ace . . . say.

Pause.

Manny Tell me, Ace, tell me!

Bron Ace?

Ace We saw an angel once.

Manny You stupid bastard.

Ace Me and my father.

Manny How could you?

Bron When?

Ace In the middle of the night.

Manny Jesus.

Ace I woke up, I heard someone outside.

Manny FOR CHRIST SAKE, ACE, IT'S A FAMILY SECRET!

Lights change. **Bron** *exits to the shadows.* **Ace** *enters dragging a body.* **Manny** *enters wearing pyjamas underneath his undercoat.*

Manny WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?

Ace (*dragging body*) Give me a hand, Dad.

Manny It's the middle of the night!

Ace I got a bloke here . . . I heard him snooping outside. I caught him red-handed. Give me a hand.

Manny Snooping?

Ace Yeh. Help me drag him in.

They drag the body to the middle of the room.

Manny Have you killed him?

Ace Course I haven't killed him, just knocked him out.

Manny Good boy.

Ace Is it safe to leave him here??

Manny Uh?

Ace 'Til he comes round?

Manny Who is he?

Ace What you think?

Manny Do I know him?

Ace Maybe we should put a blanket over him.

Manny Uh?

Ace 'Til he comes round.

Manny You going to leave him there?

Ace Where else shall I put him?

Manny He'll be in the way there.

Ace That's what I was asking.

Manny Uh?

Ace I just asked you if I should leave him here, I just asked, Dad, and you didn't say nothing.

Manny You can't leave him there.

Ace That's what I said.

Manny Somebody's bound to fall over him. You mam will fall over him when she comes downstairs.

Ace That's what I was saying.

Manny You got to move him from there or he'll cause an accident.

Ace Where shall I put him then?

Manny Put him up against the wall.

Ace Will he be safe there?

Manny Safer than he is now, he's right in the middle there, he could cause an accident, people cross there all the time, this is a busy room.

Ace I'm not putting him upstairs.

Manny Uh?

Ace Upstairs, he's not going upstairs, I got stuff upstairs.

Manny He'll freeze in the shed.

Ace I'll put a heater in there, a gas heater with settings, controllable settings, keeps it cosy.

Manny A heater?

Ace A controllable one, you can put it on setting one for one portion of the fire to come on or two and then full blast is three.

Manny We could do with something like that in here.

Ace We can't have it in here.

Manny Uh?

Ace Mam don't like gas.

Manny Uh?

Ace That's what she said, afraid it'll blow up, she said gas is dangerous.

Manny Blow up?

Ace Yeh.

Manny In here?

Ace Yeh.

Manny Gas?

Ace Yeh.

Manny Controllable gas?

Ace That's what I said, I said it won't blow up, Mam, cos it's controllable, but she wouldn't have it. She said it was gas, natural gas, she said you can't control it because it's natural.

Manny Natural?

Ace That's what she said.

Manny It's not natural.

Ace Uh?

Manny It comes in a bottle.

Ace I told her that but she still said it was natural, and what's natural is wild, wild means it can't be controlled, if it can't be controlled, it's liable to be unstable, if it's unstable it's liable to blow up at any time.

Manny But you said you've got controls on it.

Ace I have.

Manny So what she talking about?

Ace That's why I put it in the shed.

Manny Uh?

Ace Because she wouldn't have it.

Manny It's handy.

Ace It is . . . Handygas it's called.

Manny Well, there we are then, they wouldn't call it handy if it was wild, it would be against the law, they'd put a stop to it, the advertising people. (*Pause.*) Did you follow all the instructions?

Ace It's on the lid. It's permanent. Every time you turn it on you have to lift the lid, the instructions are on the lid, right in front of you, can't miss them.

Manny That's good.

Ace Keeps it cosy in there.

Manny I'll have a word with her.

Ace That's why I don't want to put him in there.

Manny Uh?

Ace Because he'll snoop around. I got everything all in order there.

Manny What you got in there?

Ace It's all in order.

Manny That's good.

Ace I don't want him snooping around in there.

Manny No.

Ace I got a lot of stuff in there, all broken down into compartments, diaries labelled so that I can get to things without having to pull all the drawers and stuff out.

Manny You haven't thrown nothing out?

Ace No.

Manny Because you'll want it one day.

Ace Mmm.

Manny It's your stuff.

Ace Mm.

Manny You'll need it one day too . . . you listening?

Ace I'm listening. (**Ace** *starts to drag the body into the corner.*) What you reckon?

Manny He's better there, better there than where he was, he could have caused an accident, he's safe over there, out of harm's way.

Ace Yeh.

Manny Let's have a look at him.

He looks.

Ace Do you know him?

Manny No. You?

Ace I don't know.

Manny Uh?

Ace I seen him somewhere.

Manny Where?

Ace Don't know, his face has got something about it.

Manny I can't place him.

Ace I don't know him. (*Pause.*) Prowling he was see. Snooping about.

Ace You said.

Ace I had to hit him.

Manny Mm.

Ace Didn't mean to hurt him, not permanent, just like knock him out, teach him a lesson.

Manny Mm.

Ace He was after the chickens he was, Dad.

Manny How do you work that out?

Ace He was by the chicken shed when I hit him.

Manny He could be from the council.

Ace No.

Manny Could be.

Ace He hasn't got a tie on.

Manny Uh?

Ace No tie, no suit, can't be from the council, all the council wear suits on official business, like council business, I seen them.

Manny Maybe he's not from the council then.

Ace Maybe he isn't.

Manny Mind you.

Ace What?

Manny Well, they don't all wear ties these days.

Ace Uh?

Manny I seen a few of them walking round, the hoi polloi without ties or suits.

Ace Where?

Manny In the village, walking about.

Ace Are you sure they're on the council?

Manny Positive, whatsisname Watkins, he's the bugger who said our house is unstable.

Ace The bastard.

The body makes a noise. **Ace** *smacks him. The body goes unconscious again.*

Manny What you do that for?

Ace I don't know.

Manny He was coming round.

Ace I know . . . but . . .

Manny You should have let him come round.

Ace I wasn't ready, Dad.

Manny Uh?

Ace We haven't worked out what we're going to do with him yet.

Manny What's to work out?

Ace We can't just leave him go.

Manny Why not, can't we?

Ace Because he'll go to the police.

Manny So?

Ace He'll tell them we hit him, then we'll have the council and the police on us.

Manny But he was stealing our chickens.

Ace We haven't got no chickens.

Manny I know, but he don't know that and you said you saw him going towards the chicken shed.

Ace He was.

Manny To steal chickens?

Ace We haven't got none, Dad, they're all dead.

Manny So what you want to hit him for?

Ace Because I thought he was from the council, I thought he'd come to knock down our house.

Manny But he hasn't got a tie!

Ace Not all the COUNCILLORS WEAR TIES, DAD.

Manny So why did you hit him, Ace?

Ace I don't know, I said.

Manny WHY DID YOU HIT HIM, ACE?

Ace I DON'T FUCKING KNOW ALL RIGHT. I SAW HIM OUT THERE PROWLING AROUND, I PICKED UP THE FENCE-POST AND HIT HIM. (*Pause.*) That's all there is to it. (*Pause.*) I saw him going towards the chickens, I knew we didn't have any no more, but he didn't. He was walking towards the shed. Chickens he was after, or eggs. He had that look about him. Like the look of a thief. Shifty he was. Look at his face. Don't he look shifty to you?

Manny He's out cold.

Ace Yeh, but shifty and out cold.

Manny A bit.

Ace He's shifty, Dad, there's no two ways about it. He's got the face of a thief. A chicken stealer, an egg stealer. That's why I hit him.

Manny With a fence-post.

Ace Yeh.

Manny The ones you're going to build a fence with?

Ace Yes.

Manny The ones that have been sitting out there since they came.

Ace Two hands I got, Dad.

Manny Two winters they been out there.

Ace My responsibility was to the chickens, anyway you were going to help me.

Manny I'm too old, Ace.

Ace I can't do everything, Dad.

Manny Too old and fucked.

Ace You're not fucked.

Manny I am.

Ace You're not . . . I NEEDED A HELPING HAND, DAD.

The body moves. **Ace** *moves to hit him.* **Manny** *holds him back.*

Manny No . . . don't.

Ace But . . .

Manny No let him come round. Then we'll decide what to do with him.

They watch the body move obviously in pain. They watch as he gets to his knees. He looks up at them and pulls down his hood. It is **Bri**. *His face is bloodied but it is unmistakably* **Bri**; *unshaven, confused, bedraggled: as if he's slept under the stars for months. He looks at them.*

Manny Are you from the council?

But before he can answer, a shot rings out from a double-barrelled shotgun and **Bri** *falls dead and bleeding on the floor.* **Mary Annie** *enters holding a gun.*

Ace Mam?

Manny Mary Annie?

Ace *runs to the dead body.*

Ace He's dead.

Mary Annie He's from the otherworld. (*Pause.*) He's come to take our house. (*Pause.*) He's in cahoots with the sea. (*Pause.*) It's not the council we got to be afraid of . . . it's the sea. I seen him watching the house. Talking fairy talk. To himself. Gibberish. Fairy talk. Nonsense. Shouting in the top field. It's where the fairies used to dance until you ploughed the field, Manny. I told you they'd be angry. They put a spell on this house because they couldn't come out and dance no more. In cahoots with the sea. (*Pause.*) Spiteful I call it. We only got a handful of fields. They got fields all over the world. We only ploughed one. But that made them spiteful. They won't be satisfied 'til the house falls into the sea. And us with it. We'll be down there with Seithennin the drunk and Davy Jones in Cantre'r Gwaelod. (*Pause.*) He's a messenger see. Come to give us a warning. It was him that killed the chickens see. Must be. But we got him. It's not the council and their bulldozers we got to be afraid of, it's the fairies. I warned you, Mansell. Don't go ploughing the field but you wouldn't have it. (*Pause.*) I seen them dancing there. When I was out on Linus's bike in the war. I'm not afraid of them. Because I've seen them. I've seen them . . . (*Pause.*) Gurruga . . . gurruga . . . gurruga . . . (*Pause.*) No bell . . . no lights . . . can't see . . . He's a fairy. (*Pause.*) From the underworld. Telling us to get out. But we're not getting out. We're staying. (*Pause.*) We're staying. We're staying. WE WILL STILL BE HERE! (*Pause.*) Good night.

Mary Annie *exits.*

Ace And then we buried him. In the black earth next to the chickens. (*Pause.*) Hoping nobody would notice. (*Pause.*) And they didn't. (*Pause.*) Still didn't stop the house from falling into the sea. (*Pause.*) An angel.

Music as **Bri** *stands, looks at them then walks away.*

Manny And you told her. (*Pause.*) You told her our secret? (*Pause.*) Ace? (*Pause.*) ACE?

Bron *enters.*

Ace We saw an angel once.

Bron When?

Ace In the middle of the night. I woke up, I heard someone outside.

Bron And?

Ace I must have scared him away.

Bron What did he look like?

Ace He wore a tie and a suit, he looked as if he came from the council.

Bron No wings.

Ace None.

Bron No halo.

Ace No.

Bron No wand.

Ace No.

Bron So what makes you think he was an angel? Ace?

Ace My imagination. Only my imagination. To be Welsh at the end of the twentieth century we got to have imagination.

Bron We do.

Ace As you said.

Bron I did.

Ace In your blue Marina.

Bron Yep.

Ace With tinted glass.

Bron With tinted glass.

Ace That we drove into the heart of Saturday night.

Bron Yes.

Ace That once belonged to your brother.

Pause.

Bron My brother's still dancing, Ace. Dancing with the hobgoblins of fairyland.

Ace Yes.

Bron He'll come back when he's tired.

Ace Yeh.

Bron When the party's over.

Ace Yeh.

There is a knock on the door. A maid stands there with a cleaning trolley.

Maid Room service.

Bron What time is it?

Maid Twenty to twelve.

Bron What day?

Maid Sunday. Check out time's half ten.

Bron Sorry.

Maid So I'd appreciate it if you'd hurry up.

Bron No problem, give us a few minutes.

Maid Otherwise you'll have to pay extra.

Bron Two minutes and we're out.

Maid Two minutes.

Bron Two minutes.

Maid I'll be counting.

She exits.

Bron What's two minutes or two years to a hobgoblin of fairyland?

Ace What's . . .

Bron Exactly. Let's go, Ace.

Ace Let's go.

Manny So you never told her.

Ace No.

Manny Because that's our secret, Ace.

Ace I know, Dad.

Manny It's a family secret we keep in the strongboxes of our minds, Ace.

Ace I know.

Manny We've locked the door and thrown away the key. (*Pause.*) We'll never look in there again will we, Ace?

Ace No, Dad.

Manny Good boy.

Pause.

Ace But at least we know now.

Manny Know what?

Ace That it wasn't an angel.

Manny We've always known, Ace, always. (*Pause.*) There are no angels and no fairies.

Ace Only brothers.

Manny Yes.

Ace And sons.

Manny Yes.

Ace Missing sons of mothers and fathers.

Manny Yes.

Ace Gone mad. (*Pause.*) It was Bri, Dad. It was Bri.

Bron And so we drove home. We didn't say much. We were stoned and beautiful. Ace was my Clyde and I was his Bonnie. I dropped him off at the foot of the mountain. He said . . .

Ace Can I see you again?

Bron Why not. Give me a call.

Ace I will.

Bron Here's my mobile number. It takes messages.

Ace Thanks. I'll ring you.

Bron You do that.

Ace So long, Bron.

Bron So long, Ace.

Ace Then she drove away.

Manny And?

Ace Then I came home.

Pause.

Manny Is that your story?

Ace It is . . . it's the end of my story.

Manny So far.

Ace Yes. (*Pause.*) Did he have a tattoo?

Manny What tattoo?

Ace On his arm. Bron said he supported Manchester United.

Manny Yes.

Ace You looked?

Manny I looked yes.

Ace Oh.

Manny And above it is the word 'mam'.

Ace Mam.

Manny And on his shoulder he's got a car.

Ace What car?

Manny A blue Marina . . . what else?

Ace Obviously.

Manny Obviously.

Ace The blue Marina 1800 TC.

Manny Something like that.

Ace Right.

Pause.

Manny So put the kettle on instead.

Ace Yeh.

Manny So we'll have a cup of tea.

Ace Right.

Manny With milk.

Ace Yeh.

Manny And sugar.

Ace Right.

Manny Well, go on then.

Ace I'm going, I'm going.

Pause. The two men stand in silence.

Manny You going or what?

Ace I'm going, I'm going.

Pause.

Manny Sons . . . huh. (*Pause.*) Huh . . .

Fade in the sound of the sea. Fade to black.

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'Ed Thomas is the most exciting playwright to come out of Wales.' *Guardian*

Bron meets Ace six days after his house falls into the sea. Their families may share a past of fairies, angels, axe-murderers and chickens, but what do Bron and Ace need with the past when they've got imagination and a tinted glass blue Marina 1800 TC ready to drive into the heart of Saturday night?

Set in a shrinking land *Gas Station Angel* is the latest play from Ed Thomas whose previous plays include *House of America* (also recently released as a film) and *Songs From a Forgotten City*.

Gas Station Angel, toured by Fiction Factory, premiered at Newcastle Playhouse in May 1998 prior to its first performance at The Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in June 1998 in a production directed by the

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